ISABEL DE BARSAS.

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A TRADITION OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY.

"What art thou that usurp'st this time of night,
Together with that fair and warlike form?"

SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ISABEL DE BARSAS.

CHAPTER I.

CARL left Margaret with a promise of soon returning to her, and there is little doubt that his intention was to keep his word, for his views gave him patience, and although he seemed to spare his intended victim by leaving her to herself, he was neither softened nor moved by repentance, but gloried in the blackness of the crime which he meditated. As if fate lent its irresistible assistance for the escape of the fugitives, Carl, on returning to consult with Barbara, sat himself down and went fast asleep; she followed his example, and they must have slept some hours, since her newly replenished lamp went out, and left them to forget their enormities in the sombre shades of night.

Carl had been many nights on the watch for his victims, and was so much fatigued that he slept as soundly in the chair as he would have done in bed.—But the hour of waking came at last, and when he found himself in the dark, and without the means of procuring a light, without traversing the long galleries, and going for it to the inhabited part of the castle, he cursed, swore, and threatened so horribly, that Barbara, fiend as she was, could not hear him without terror.

"Get you gone, cursed old bone-sucker!" cried the wretch, to the affrighted woman. "Go, I say, get me a light directly, or I'll skin you alive."

"I can't get one," said the woman.

"You must, or I'll dash your brains out against the floor."—As Carl said this he began feeling about for Barbara, who no sooner heard him coming to her, than she set about searching for the door, and having found it, directed her steps towards Isabel's room, as she remembered that she had let her taper burn

the night before, and thought it probable she might now have done the same.

Like all other criminals, Carl was a great coward in the dark of night, and feared he might see the spirits of those he had murdered and tortured to death. He therefore made the best of his way to the door and crept after Barbara, trusting to her company to protect him against the apparitions, which he dreaded more than the commission of any crime that could be mentioned. Not less terrified than himself, the wicked old woman derived comfort from hearing him behind her.

They went on until Barbara came to the door of her prisoner's room, and taking a huge bunch of keys from her pocket, prepared to unlock it. But what was her surprise when she found the door open, and that no one answered to her call. Carl took the alarm, and at once forgetting his dread of supernatural beings, rushed forward into the room; but it was dark, and he could find nothing but the furniture over which he stumbled.

"What is all this!" he exclaimed, in accents

of ferocious rage, "fiend of hell, what is all this? Answer! you dry skeleton devil; where are you?"

"I'm here," said the astonished Barbara.

"What's become of her? where is she?" he vociferated.

"Gone:" said she.

"You lie! old hag, you lie!" he exclaimed, striking at her with a chair that lay in his way, but missing his sombre aim.

"So much the better for you," said she.

"Hold your tongue! you dry devil's imp," cried Carl. "Where's the girl?"

"Did you not tell me to hold my tongue?" she replied.

"Speak! then," he exclaimed in a thundering voice.

"Why, love," said Barbara, "do you not see through it all?——Master came for her, and she's gone with him."

"You're an old fool!" said Carl; "he never served t'other wenches so well, why should he take her to his own room? You're mad, old scarecrow, you are, and you want kicking

round the castle to bring you to your wits again, if you ever had any."

"Don't talk so, Carl," said the woman; "the girl's safe, I warrant you; master's had a care of that; she's too nice a bit to lose."

"Go and look for her then," said Carl. "Why don't you go for a light to your kitchen?"

"I don't like going," said the woman. "It would be easier to get one from t'other part of the castle."

"What are you afraid of?" said he.

"Nothing, nothing," replied the woman; "I don't mind going if you will come with me."

"Very well," said he, for he did not like being left alone. They felt their way into the passage, and in the same manner crept along until they came to a distant set of offices, at the end of which was the kitchen appropriated to the reputed forsaken side of the castle. They were very long upon their way, and did not get so far without giving themselves some severe blows. Every one which Carl got produced a volly of oaths, and often attributing it

to Barbara, he unceremoniously struck her whenever he found her within his reach. Painful as were the strokes, she dared not rebuke him, for she knew, by experience, that the more she said the more returns she got for her pains.

At last the expiring embers of the kitchen fire proclaimed that they had not travelled so far for nothing: Barbara got a light, and they returned towards the empty room.

"The wind's cold to-night," said Barbara; "some doors must be open."

"You're an old fool!" said Carl; "didn't I shut them myself last night? I fastened every door and window; and none but you, I, or the devil could open them.—You haven't done it, have you, old bone-sucker?"

"Not I, indeed, love," replied the woman; "and I know *you* haven't."

"Hold your tongue then!" said he.

They soon arrived at the room; Carl looked anxiously forward and exclaimed, "What's all this confusion? look at the chairs and tables about the floor."

They had by this time entered, and began a diligent search of the room, upon and under the bed.

"She hasn't taken her things," said the woman, "therefore she must be with master."

"He wouldn't have come this way for her," said Carl; "he would have come through the sliding door.——What the devil's there! here's my dagger, as I'm alive. Who can have stuck it in here?"

"That's odd enough," said the woman, examining the hole which had been bored with the dagger.

"Now I see all about it," exclaimed the ruffian with an air of triumph. "Well, old hag, you are right for once, an' curse you."—— He paused a moment to consider, and proceeded—"Master has been here, I can see it by the door: nobody can open it but himself; he went out by this door, and put the dagger into the sliding one to prevent the girl's getting away."

"A good plan too," said Barbara; "but master Carl, how do you account for the bolts

being drawn, the lock open, and the things knocked about?"

"That's natural enough," said Carl, feeling confident that he must be right in his conjectures; "he came round and undid the door; then went in by the sliding panel."

"True, master Carl," said the woman, "I must have been a great fool not to have thought of it before. We needn't have been in such a fright about the wench."

"No," said Carl.

"I shall go to bed now," said Barbara. "Pretty hours, indeed; it will soon be daylight."

"You may go where you will," quoth Carl, "and be d—n'd to you."

"Ha! ha! ha!—always the same, always the same," said Barbara, laughing violently.

"Always the same, mother dry shank?" said Carl. "You must show me a light."

"Very well, very well," quoth Barbara; "come on," and she led the way.

When they came to Margaret's door, Carl put the key confidently in the key-hole, drew

the bolts, and pushed the door; but what was his astonishment when he found it to be fastened within: he swore tremendously; demanded instant admittance; threatened Margaret with death if she did not let him in, and endeavoured by main force to obtain what threats could not procure: but the door was too strong, and fearful of incurring the anger of his master by fetching any instrument to accomplish the work, he was finally compelled to yield to the entreaties of Barbara, who besought him to have patience till the next day.

Carl vowed he would not; but he had no alternative, save the trap-door; and the idea of passing the dungeon in which laid the remains of the murdered female, was too terrifying to allow him to make use of it. He therefore lavished a volley of impious oaths upon his intended victim, and retraced his steps towards the kitchen; after which, having procured another light, he went to finish the night in his own bed.—Barbara went to hers.

Carl had never been more furious; he declared he would murder Margaret; and, in the

ferocity of his heart, promised himself satisfaction by torturing her in every way that he could imagine. Had he caught her at that moment he would certainly have done it, and have imbrued his hands in the blood of the innocent girl.

At the same hour as on the preceding morning Barbara went to Isabel's room, and began arranging it. The chairs and tables were again set in the proper places, the bed made, and the few scattered articles of dress folded up and put in their proper places; in short, she prepared every thing for her prisoner's use; still supposing her to be with the Marquis de Morbiere.

When she had done her work, and had proceeded some way down the long gallery leading from the room, she was met by him, and he addressed her in the following words:

"Good morning, old woman, how's the girl to-day?"

"You have a mind to be merry, Sir," replied Barbara, who fancied he was joking with her for having taken her away.

"What do you mean?" said he, with his natural impatience.

"Don't look so, Sir," said she, laughing. "The girl's safe enough; you took her away."

"I have not taken her away," he replied, curling his brows together.

"How, Sir——!" quoth she, turning her eyes to the corner of their sockets, and looking sideways at her master; "you would not have me think so?"

"Hold your prattle," said he; "see and teach the wench her lesson, and force into her head that she must lay aside her airs, and that my will must be done in this castle."

"I will when I see her," said she.

"Go back to her now then," said he, pushing her towards the room.

Barbara began to suspect that all was not right, and said, "You gave master Carl and I a great fright by taking the girl to your room."

"What!" cried he.

"You frightened us; we thought the girl was off," said she (for she had not yet discovered that all the doors were left open); it was Carl's

business to see to them, and he was not yet stirring.

"The devil take you for your jokes," exclaimed the Marquis, with increasing impatience.

"I don't joke," said Barbara; "you took away the girl, thinking to frighten us."

"Tell me, wretch," exclaimed the affrighted Marquis, catching her by the neck, and half-strangling her, "What do you mean? Speak, infernal fiend, or I'll choke you."

The woman attempted to obey, but he stopped her breath, and she could not articulate a word.

"Tell me," he cried, tightening his grasp. —Barbara struggled convulsively, and began to turn black in the face. He loosened, vociferating for a third time "Speak!"

"The girl's gone then, if you haven't her," said the terrified woman, who expected no mercy from her tyrannical employer, if her charge had really escaped.

"Fiends of hell!" roared the impious man —"what have you done with her?"

Barbara stood trembling before him; she had no hope left, for she thought that instant death would follow the proof of her escape.

"Come along, old hag—come, you she-devil; come, you traitress—" and as he uttered these words he dragged her by the hair to the eventful room.—When they got there, he struck her a violent blow, which laid her prostrate, and, with a savage kick in the loins, he cried, "Where's the girl?"

To a woman of Barbara's age such a fall was a serious injury, and the kick which the ferocious ruffian gave her had almost deprived her of reason:—she could not answer, but lay groaning on the floor. Seeing the harm he had done her, and fearing lest by further brutality he might lose the wished-for information, he assumed a milder tone, and said, "Do you know any thing of the girl?"—Barbara shook her head.——————"Has she escaped?"—She again shook her head, meaning that she knew not.—"Have you seen any thing of her?"

"No," groaned the woman, and making an effort to speak, added, "Fetch Carl."

"Where is he?" Barbara shook her head, for she was too much hurt to speak. The Marquis therefore ran to Carl's room.

When he got there he found him yet in bed. The business was too pressing to be postponed on account of propriety, and the master too much connected with the man to care about it; he therefore entered the moment the door was opened to him, and questioned Carl concerning his knowledge of Isabel's flight.

"Ask yourself, blood-and-hounds!" cried Carl. "What do you come bothering here for? If the girl's gone, so much the better for her; why didn't you look after her as I have after mine?"

"You are too passionate, Carl," said the Marquis in a gentle tone, knowing the danger of aggravating him.

"You're a fool, an' curse you," quoth Carl; "Didn't you give me trouble enough to get her, without bothering me about her now?—Go and look for her; she can't be out of the castle; here are the keys." Carl pointed to a large bunch of keys upon the chair by his bed-

side. The Marquis took them up, examined them one by one, and put them down again.

"Are'n't they all right?" said Carl, thinking himself suspected; "I say, master, take your keys, and be your own servant; it's high time that such fellows as you should take the places to which you lower yourselves."

"Don't talk so, Carl," said the Marquis; "tell me what you know of the girl, there's a good fellow."

"The old story," said the man; "you take me for a fool, and think to come over me with your nonsense, don't you?"

"No, Carl," replied his master; "I know you to be a worthy good fellow."

"Ha! ha!" roared Carl; "I like your calling me worthy and good. Take a walk to the dungeon down stairs, master; you'll have a sight of your worthiness and mine too. I can smell the poor devil from here!"

"*You* persuaded me to starve her," said the Marquis; "you had the doing of it all."

"You lie!" exclaimed the hireling of infamy; "you would have had me pull her nails off,

put out her eyes with red hot iron, and cut her flesh into minced-meat; can you deny it?"

"This is not a time for confession," replied the Marquis; "we have both done so much that we may as well do more."

"As well be hanged for an ox as a loaf." Quoth Carl, "I think so too."

"Come, Carl," said the former, "tell me about the girl."

As it was Carl's invariable rule to humble his master, before making any concession, in order to be the better able to put his own price upon whatever was required of him, or enhance the value of the assistance he rendered him, he never failed to avail himself of every opportunity to abuse him, and bring him on a level with himself; indeed, there existed but a shadow of difference between them, if it was possible for one to be more criminal or contemptible than the other; for as the one received the price of human blood, the other paid it, and it was in his service that the deeds were done. The Marquis de Morbiere was certainly the most criminal: for his

education did away with the plea of ignorance which his infamous accomplice might have urged in his own favour. But, far from excusing himself, or reverting to the unfortunate female from the effects of contrition, his only wish was to get better paid on future occasions, and to kindle a feeling of fear in his master, by which he could keep him down, as the laws of the land were even stronger than his well-built castle, and likely to be called into action, should he break with his man.

Having attained his object, Carl entered into minute detail of the state in which he found Isabel's room, and of his conclusions that she must have been with him. He likewise described the finding of the dagger, and asked the Marquis whether he had not put it into the sliding door to prevent its being opened from the other side. All this being new to him, he naturally denied having any knowledge of what could have become of his prisoner, and related to Carl the manner in which he was repulsed by her, and eventually compelled to postpone his criminal intentions. He ended with asking

him how she could have become possessed of a dagger.

"The dagger is mine," said Carl; "I missed it the day I brought her here. I suppose I must have dropped it in the room, and she or her maid has picked it up. I shall find out the truth of it, for I have the wench safe under lock and key."

"How came you to be here to-night then?" said the Marquis.

"Why, she managed to fasten the door within, and I couldn't open it."

"The devils seem to have understood each other," said Morbiere. "Get up, Carl, and make inquiries of her."

"I can do that fast enough," said Carl. He soon slipt on his clothes, and went with the Marquis to the room in which he had left Margaret.

They endeavoured by every possible means to open the door, but it was fast, and no answer was given to the questions which were put from without.

"I bet my life she is gone too," said the

Marquis; "the girl would be heard at all events."

"Impossible!" said Carl, "the door's too thick for sound to penetrate."

"Have you tried the trap?" said the former. "No!" replied the man, "you don't think I would go round there at night, to be poisoned by the stench of the girl in the dungeon?"

"Go and see now then," said the Marquis.

"I will, if you come with me," quoth Carl.

The Marquis agreed, and they bent their steps towards the cells.

"How the wind blows in here," said Carl. "Some door must be opened; let us look about."

"I have been betrayed," exclaimed the Marquis; "the doors are open."

"The devil must have opened them then," said Carl, "for here are the keys, and I locked them all myself. Barbara was with me at the time."

The Marquis went from door to door, and at length to the postern gate, and found every

one of them wide open. It is impossible to conceive his fury; he raged, accused Carl of infidelity, and vowed death to the offender. On the other hand, Carl abused his master for suspecting him, and swore that Margaret should forfeit her life for the escape of her mistress. In this state they returned to the small stone stair-case door, in which they found the keys with the keys of the cells.

"See here," exclaimed Morbiere, "what further proof can I require of your treachery? here are the keys I bid you take care of; the other girl has escaped, and your life shall pay the price of both."

"Hold your foolery," cried Carl, turning round upon his master, "or by my soul I will dash your brains out against your own wall; do you think I am going to put up with your threats? No, master! that won't do, I promise you. If we come to hands, we shall have a fair trial of it, and if we come to words, I will have the last, mind that. You are in my power."

"I do not want to quarrel with you," said the Marquis; "you are too passionate. Go and see whether your girl is safe."

"You always think to soften me down," said Carl, "but there's a time for all things; I won't be bullied by you."

"You know I'm your best friend," said the former, tapping him familiarly on the back; "we must not quarrel."

"I don't want to quarrel," said Carl, surlily.

"Look for the girls then," said his employer.

Carl ascended the stair-case, and whispered to the Marquis, who followed close after, "All's safe;" he undrew the bolts of the trap, and introduced himself gently into the room, but it was forsaken. "She's gone too," he cried in a voice of frantic passion.

"Impossible!" said the Marquis, who came up after Carl, "it cannot be."

"It is, it is," cried Carl. "Oh! that I could catch one of them."

The escape of both prisoners from different parts of the castle was more than the Marquis

or Carl could account for; they carefully examined the room, but there was no trace of any thing which could lead them to suppose that either had escaped by ordinary means. It was clear that Isabel had escaped by the door of her room, which was found open by Barbara. The means by which Margaret got away were more extraordinary in Carl's opinion; for the door was fastened on both sides, and the trap secured from without, so that he could not imagine how she could have got out of the room, otherwise than by the chimney. The Marquis thought this conclusion very reasonable, and carefully examined it; but there appeared nothing to strengthen the suspicion, since no footmark was visible upon the hearth, which was thickly covered with dust.

Fortmain had managed to give Carl so good an opinion of his faithfulness, that during this embarrassing moment he was not once suspected, and he was allowed to remain for a day or two among the people of the castle, without the least apprehension of his betraying the iniquitous transactions in which he had

assisted. He was much disliked by the domestics on account of his taciturnity, and the apparent moroseness of his temper. But he heeded nothing they said to him; and although it was a kind of pastime with them to teaze and laugh at him, he remained unmoved, and appeared scarcely sensible of the sport they made of him. They did all they could to make him smile, but their attempts were ineffectual, and appeared rather to bring a cloud of displeasure across his brow, than to create an inclination to join in their merriment.

No suspicion being entertained of Fortmain, and no one in the castle supposed to know of the imprisonment of Isabel and her maid, the whole transaction was enveloped in a deep mystery, which required no common event to unravel.

CHAPTER II.

Although the Marquis de Morbiere saw no immediate probability of gaining any favourable information relative to the occurrences of the preceding night, he was not a man to leave things in a state of uncertainty, or to forego his intentions towards the unfortunate object of his anxiety. Margaret's escape was a matter of complete indifference to him, and had she been the only fugitive he would have been rather pleased than otherwise; he was jealous of every one, and coveted Carl's prize; for she was young and pretty, and had more than once excited sentiments as dishonourable to him as they were dangerous to herself. When Carl declared he would not assist his employer upon terms short of the capture of Margaret, and of her being given up to his discretion, the Marquis was obliged to agree, or relinquish the capture

of her mistress. This he would not do, and although he would gladly have snatched the maid from his hands at any price, to have had her in his own power, he was compelled to submit to the demand of Carl, and even to promise his personal assistance, should it be necessary, for the attainment of his object.

Carl never acted without the fee being previously lodged in his fob, and when there, he little cared whether his services were successful or not. To him, the loss of Margaret was a source of great disappointment, and he inwardly swore never to let himself be prevailed upon to suffer his victim for a moment out of his sight, should he succeed in recovering her. His master's loss grieved him but little, as he thought his services would again be wanted; and as he was always ready to commit any enormity for the sake of pecuniary remuneration, he already considered what he should ask for aiding him in the re-capture of the lost treasure.

The Marquis and his man canvassed the business over until they returned to the room

where the former had left the guilty old woman groaning upon the floor. She was still prostrate, and unable to move. She complained of dreadful pain, and said her master had done her a serious injury; Carl laughed immoderately, and exclaimed—" Well, old bone-sucker, you're come to a stand-still at last."

" Help me up," cried the woman; " I can't move."

" Help yourself up, scare-crow," said Carl; " I've enough to do to take care of myself. It serves you right for letting the girls out."

" I did not," cried the woman; " I never betrayed my trust."

" That's right, Barbara," quoth the Marquis. " You speak like a good woman; I hope I have not hurt you?"

" Yes, but you have though," she replied; making an ineffectual effort to rise; " you have indeed, Sir. Do be so good as to help me up."

The Marquis and Carl helped her up, and laid her upon the couch.

" Oh! my side, my side," cried Barbara; " I've a bone coming out, I have indeed; do

feel, Sir, in pity feel, Sir; I shall die if I suffer so."

Carl felt where she directed him, and said there was certainly something odd about it; his master then felt and blushed deep crimson; he requested Carl to feel again; he did it, and declared she had a broken rib. It was true; the Marquis had kicked her so ferociously that he had broken it.

They immediately removed her to the bed, and endeavoured to replace the fractured bone, but both being inexperienced, they only occasioned an increase of pain, without affording her any assistance. A difficulty which appeared insurmountable now arose; how was medical aid to be procured without making known that the reputed deserted part of the castle was inhabited, and incurring the risk of a disclosure of the mysteries of the place? They saw all the danger of their situation, and knew not how to provide against the train of consequences which might follow. Had not Barbara been a most valuable servant for the purposes for which she was employed, and had

there been the most distant prospect of finding any one worthy of her place, or calculated for her successor, they would have had but little anxiety; and she would have been suffered to drag on a miserable existence, until nature should either operate a cure or put an end to her sufferings.

Most of the day was spent in this dilemma, and at last they were indebted to Barbara herself for an expedient; she desired to be carried from the castle to some cottage, where the doctor of the district could attend her. The Marquis immediately closed with the proposal, and it was agreed with Carl, that he would desire Fortmain to assist him in the removal of the afflicted woman.

It was not deemed expedient to remove her before the fall of night, as they might probably meet passengers or labourers upon the road, and inquiries might be made concerning the nature of the expedition upon which they were bent. Besides, to avoid suspicion, the Marquis de Morbiere had positively forbid any person's going out of the desolated part of the

castle at any time but night, and this order had been regularly complied with for years. The outer walls being on that side much higher than the castle itself, owing to its being commanded by an adjoining hill; it was not possible that lights should be discerned when burning within, and consequently, by day and by night, nothing appeared which could in any way remove the belief which generally existed among the vassals in the neighbourhood.

Soon after dusk Fortmain was at his post, and Barbara was carried down to the postern gate, and placed upon a horse: Carl rode on one side, and his companion on the other. She had not gone far before she declared herself unable to proceed. Carl was too void of pity to listen, and swore she must continue; but she prayed and entreated, and when she found neither would do, she began screaming violently in hopes of bringing some one to her assistance. This was, of all expedients, the least calculated to prevail upon her unmerciful conductor, and the more she screamed the more he urged on the horse. She was, in-

deed, in too dreadful a state to travel, particularly on horseback, for the broken rib literally worked out of her side, and mangled her shockingly. In this way they journied upwards of two leagues; Carl aggravating the woman's sufferings by the barbarity of his language, and Fortmain seldom uttering a word unless it was to comfort her.

They had very little farther to go when Fortmain declared he could no longer hold her up; his employer commanded her to help herself, or that she might hang across the horse, as he would not be troubled with her; but to all he said she returned no answer, for she was dead!

"No matter," said Carl, "when Fortmain told him of her being no more, "it will save the doctoring; the old devil's been fairly kicked out of the world at last. What shall we do with her? leave her here, take her on, or carry her back again?"

"Better take her back," said Fortmain, "we may, perhaps, be accused of making away with her if we don't."

"Who would care for that?" cried Carl "Our master knows better than to speak; he has done enough that way for any man."

"I'm for taking her back," said Fortmain.

"Well, you shall have your way for once," said Carl, "and may take care of her, for I won't. If she had been young, and alive, it would have been very well, but old and dead, that's another thing. You may have her to yourself."

Fortmain was so indignant that he could have exterminated the wretch for his hardness of heart, but the part he had taken in late events obliged him to forbear his resentment, and he turned back towards the castle, leading Barbara's horse, and without making a comment upon her fate.

Thus ended the career of a woman who had lived a long life of infamous profligacy, who delighted in the dishonour of her sex, and whose services had, for a series of years, been devoted to a master even more criminal and more despicable than herself. On no occasion had she ever saved a pang to a suffering fe-

male. The groans of death, the tears of entreaty, the prayers of the starving, were music to her ears, and she delighted in accumulating their miseries by every torture which she had the power to inflict. If it were necessary to picture the most degraded of human beings, to describe the human heart, decayed by vice and crime; to portray the feelings of a soul blackened by every enormity, and to represent the most contemptible of her species, Barbara might have been held up as an example of multiplied worthlessness, and although a death like hers was too mild when compared to the sufferings she had heaped upon others, even as a corpse she exhibited the history of her past life, and looked truly horrible.

When they returned to the castle, Carl went by the communication apartments to inform his master of the result of their expedition.

The Marquis was not yet gone to bed; he started from his chair when he heard the well-known signal of Carl's approach, and wondered what could have again happened to disturb him. The moment the guilty wretch was

admitted he gave a brief account of the woman's death, remarking at the same time, that as Fortmain had rendered himself worthy the trust, he would recommend him as her successor. The Marquis could not help feeling some slight remorse for the death of a person who had made herself eminently serviceable to him in assisting him in the perpetration of those crimes which any other woman would have looked upon with abomination. He knew Barbara to be void of feeling, and to be hardened to every thing, however disgusting, and she was, of all persons in the world, the best suited to his purpose. In losing her, he lost his principal supporter, his jailor, and one of his executioners: she was therefore a treble loss, and a servant not to be replaced without considerable difficulty and many trials; for treason would involve the mighty man himself, and bring him to the ignominious end which he had so often, and so richly deserved, but which he averted by means of Carl, and by keeping up the story of the castle's being partly deserted.

Fortmain had, in the estimation of the Marquis de Morbiere, proved himself a very valuable servant, by having assisted in the capture of Isabel and Margaret, and by the apparent seriousness of his temper, which bid fair that he would be faithful to his trust. He ably deceived him, and had strength of mind to dissemble his ardent desire to serve Albert de la Lance. His life was at stake, as in case of detection his employers would think no torture too dreadful for the punishment of his duplicity. He was aware of his danger, and contemplated it with heroic calmness, determined to frustate every endeavour which might be made to detain him in the castle of Morbiere.

Carl's recommendation would have gone a great way, and perhaps have induced the Marquis to appoint Fortmain to the situation vacant by Barbara's death, but the suspiciousness of his character, which disinclined him to trust in any one of whose sincerity he had not sufficient proof, made him hesitate, and adopt the more prudent determination of not

appointing any one until further consideration.

Carl was somewhat disappointed; he would have remonstrated, and even have dictated, but it was of no use, as the man he had to deal with was as obstinate as himself, and unalterable when he had laid himself down a line of conduct.

Swearing as he went, Carl returned to his companion, and told him of what he had been doing on his behalf. A surly thank was all his acknowledgment of his good offices, and he turned away without commenting upon the Marquis's indecision, or want of faith in him. Carl was neither hurt or displeased with his moroseness, believing it to belong to his natural character, and esteeming it as his most valuable quality.

In the warmth of his pleadings Carl forgot to ask his master what he intended doing with the remains of the deceased woman; he was therefore at a loss how to dispose of her. He thought he would lower his importance by consulting Fortmain, and determined to take

the management of the business upon himself; the body was consequently removed to an empty stable, to remain there till the next morning. They then retired to rest.

Soon after daylight Fortmain was aroused by Carl's knocking repeatedly at his door, desiring him to get up; he obeyed with as little delay as possible, and they proceeded together to the place where the corpse had been deposited.

As if it had been but a log of wood, Carl threw the body over his shoulder, and bore it away to the subterraneous range of dungeons. Fortmain with folded arms followed in contemplative silence, seemingly meditating on the barbarity of the man that walked before him, and struggling with the feelings which so deeply oppressed him.

When they reached the dungeons, Carl turned into one of them, and threw down his burden. "There!" said he to the lifeless Barbara, "near home at last, old Styxfish; may the devil see you safe stranded. You'll be safer off than our master, for he will come to the

gallows; and better off, perhaps, than us two, for we stand good chance of hanging to the same noose. Here, partner, lend me a hand; blood-an'hounds! you needn't stand staring there; I suppose you wonder what I'm about; come here, and I'll show you something; some day or other you may want to use it; mark the place then, for I'd lay my life them two young wenches will come to it if we ever catch'em again: they'll tell lies enough as it is to put our necks in jeopardy."—Fortmain drew near. "Come along," cried Carl; "you're shy, it seems; but that won't do for our work. Help me pull up this cover-stone." He lent his assistance as desired. They raised the stone, which covered a deep pit resembling a dry well. —"Look in," resumed Carl; "that white-looking linen covers the body of a devilish fine girl, who tickled our master's fancy; but she was too many for us; and as it wouldn't do to turn her out to tell tales we tumbled her in here. Master wanted to toss her in alive, but that was too bad; and to put her out of her misery, I knocked out her brains against the

wall.—Come to this side; here, where I stand. Don't you see the head and one of the arms?"

"Yes," replied Fortmain, almost sinking with horror. "Who was she?"

"That's no business of your's," replied the savage monster; "she's here, and that's enough: but she's not alone, company was sent before her many a time. There's a man or two in there, and I can't tell how many women. Let me see, it's a woman and her young child that's under the one you see. I would have saved her if I could; but it would have been too dangerous, for master sadly ill-used her; and yet I'm not given to flinching."

"Did Barbara know of it?" said Fortmain.

"To be sure," quoth Carl; "that's the fun she liked. But what would master say if he were to hear me tell you all this? D—n me if he wouldn't think me faint-hearted, and that would be worse than all; for I hope to have some rare fun yet. I like this kind of work, don't you, Master Fortmain?"

"Sometimes," quoth Fortmain; with assumed composure.

"That's right," cried Carl; "now for old bone-sucker; come old wench:" he took her up in his arms, and threw her into the hole. "Good by, a pleasant time of it.—Now, old scratch, you may fetch her."

Fortmain was an old soldier; he had faced death in all its ghastly forms, he had seen misery upon misery, and wretchedness upon wretchedness, but never had he beheld a scene so horrible as the one before him; he sickened at the sight. More than once he was on the point of hurling the barbarian into the unhallowed grave upon the brink of which he stood: but what would have been the consequence? He staggered at the thought, and shuddered at the heartbreaking necessity under which he was, of keeping up the character which he had put on, to serve an end which could not be attained without it.

After a moment's pause, Carl looked to Fortmain for some observation on what he was doing, and thought it probable that he might blame his manner of disposing of the wretched woman, but that not being the case, he inter-

preted his silence more favourably and gave him credit for being pleased with it.

"Is'n't this a nice way of getting rid of them?" said he.

"Very," quoth Fortmain; turning his face from the open pit.

"Well, help me down with the stone again," said Carl.

Fortmain assisted him, and as he lowered the stone, a big tear fell from his eye into the hole. A deep sigh had almost betrayed him, when Carl bade him return with him. The relief was truly grateful, but it was not of long duration, for his barefaced conductor stopped him ere they had proceeded half way down the gallery and asked him whether he had seen "the girl in the other dungeon." He replied in the negative.

"Come then," said he; "and I'll tell you how she came there."

Fortmain allowed himself to be led to the dungeon in which the unfortunate female laid mouldering away upon the stone bench. The vapours of the place nearly overpowered him,

and he was almost inclined to turn away, but curiosity gave him courage, and he followed his guide into the cell. There was just light enough admitted through the door to allow him to behold the murdered innocent; he shuddered convulsively, and could scarcely stand upon his legs, so much was he affected with the sight.

"What more shall I see?" he exclaimed to himself; "it is too dreadful."—Too dreadful indeed it was; it was even more: but how can it be expressed?

"She's almost gone," said Carl; pointing to the unfortunate girl. "The smell is not pleasant here, let us be off, I'll tell you all about it in a sweeter place."

"How many more such objects have you got?" said Fortmain.

"No more as yet," he answered; "but I dare say you'll help us to more."

"How came you by so many?" quoth Fortmain.

"Some one way, some another," answered Carl. "Some for love, some for hatred, some

for jealousy, and others for fun. We have killed many more that ar'nt here."

"Where are they then?" said Fortmain.

"Any where, every where," exclaimed Carl; "some on the highway, some in the forests, some in this country, and some in foreign lands; plenty of 'em, I promise you; and the best on't is that I've fingered cash for all. Blood-an-hounds, master and I used to scour the country once upon a time; we're quite tame to what we used to be, but if we don't soon get the girls again, we shall be wanting you to help us at other work. We shall have rare fun."

"Now that we are, away from the cell, tell me about the young woman," said Fortmain.

"There is'n't much about her," quoth Carl; "only that she was starved to death for being obstinate. I meant to have told you all about it, but I won't now, I'll think of it first."

The fact is Carl saw his companion was more interested in the story than he wished to appear, and thought it most prudent to keep the promised information from him, until he should have made another trial or two of him.

Having returned to the yard from which Carl had carried Barbara, he told Fortmain he had something to do and that he might amuse himself as he chose. He was too wretched to be amused, and too disgusted with the castle to wish to prolong his stay in it; he therefore went back to the kitchen, and determined upon asking permission to return that night to the castle of Barsas. His principal object was to see Albert de la Lance, and to inform him of all that had occurred since his arrival within the walls of the castle de Morbiere.

CHAPTER III.

WHILST these barbarous events were passing at the castle of the impious Marquis, others of a different complexion happened on the borders of the Loire. The young Count de Barsas, had, as our readers have already been told, assumed the power and title which in right of inheritance descended to him, with a hand no less haughty and imperious than his late father, and with a mind incapable of preserving them in the respectable state to which they had been raised by a succession of owners, equally proud of their possessions, and jealous of their fame.

Adrien de Barsas was not wanting in abilities or in information: nature had been bountiful to him, nay, profligately so, for it had given him the means (had he been willing to improve them) of distinguishing himself as well by intellectual acquirements, as by manly

strength. The soil was good, capable of bearing abundant crops; of yielding fascinating variety; of growing the best productions. It had been carefully cultivated; every thing was planted into it which could ornament and improve it; but it was afterwards neglected, and what had been done by care and diligence, was speedily destroyed by negligence and slothfulness. It was unfortunate, for he would with his rank and fortune, and with a clear head and an upright heart, have attained to honours, even more considerable than those of which he was so proud, and have filled the seat of power with more splendour than his forefathers (in all their costly magnificence) had been able to attain. He failed however, and his failure was complete; as from one extreme he fell into the other, and from consideration he fell into disregard, and it was probable that from disregard he would fall into contempt.

The Countess de Barsas was too full of herself to pay much attention to his predilections; and too vain of her child to see his errors; those little faults therefore which in extreme

youth, were passed over and laughed at, grew up into habit, and became not only unpardonable in maturer years, but also criminal, and poisonous to his happiness, as they were insupportable and destructive of the comforts of those around him.

It did not appear that she was aware of his increasing inferiority; on the contrary, she every day felt increasing confidence in his goodness and judgment, and although he treated her with no small degree of impertinent levity whenever her opinion was in contradiction to his own, she continued blind and shut her eyes to every thing, even to events which happened immediately before them, and which drew upon him the unqualified disapprobation of friends who had known him from his tenderest years.

By flattering his rising vanity the priest succeeded in gaining the most dangerous ascendancy over him, and made such artful use of his power, that by degrees he became the complete dictator of his actions, and in leading him into whatever he desired, he attended,

not as he should have done, to the honour and dignity of his young lord, but to his own mercenary views, and to the forwarding that which he fancied might increase his own weight and influence.

It was natural enough, that a priest living in ease and idleness, whose whole duty extended no farther than saying grace, running over a hasty mass, and absolving a few confessing penitents, should turn his thoughts to something by way of employment, and should choose that which was likely to afford him most amusement and least trouble. Intrigue offered a constant and variegated field, it gave him importance, flattered his self-sufficiency, and brought him into notice; but, whilst he rose in the one scale, something must naturally have lowered in the other, and the loser, although great and successful pains were taken to prove the contrary, was the young Count de Barsas.

Robert very fortunately bore the *Abbé* no love; on the contrary, he despised him exceedingly, and avoided his society on every possi-

ble occasion. For this reason he had escaped the crafty man's poisonous influence, and waded clear of his dangerous dominion.

With this divided opinion of the priest's worth, it was impossible for Adrien and his brother to agree; their natural disparity of character rendered it the more so, and tended to frustrate Robert's continual endeavours to be upon terms with him. But whenever a question arose on the subject, whenever an explanation took place, the Abbé was invariably the marplot, and on his account were negotiations broken off.

The priest had for some years led Adrien into a belief that Robert was jealous of his prospects, and wished to usurp them to his disadvantage: with a temper naturally inclined to listen to unfavourable reports of his brother, it was no difficult task to make the desired impression; suspicion followed of course, and hatred soon supplied its place.

Completely blinded by superior affection for her first born, and the willing dupe of the two-fold conspiracy, the Countess allowed

Adrien and his counsellor to root-up the affection to which Robert had a claim, and to impress upon her too credulous mind the belief, that he was really aiming at his brother's rank and fortune. His popularity strengthened the belief, and every one that dared praise or defend him, was looked upon as the enemy of the liege lord, and as a traitor to his allegiance. How many traitors could she not have found upon the vast domain of Barsas!—Robert was loved, as his brother was hated; he was respected, as the other was despised; he was cheerfully obeyed, as Adrien's commands were reluctantly complied with. This the jealous mother saw; this the plotting priest pointed out, on every possible occasion.

Isabel, both within and without the castle, came in for a share of the feelings to which Robert gave birth; her mother accused her of unjust preference, although blind to her own folly; and the vassals adored her for the goodness which she displayed at every period of her existence.

Adrien had no sooner come into power, than

he began to use it with the merciless hand of arbitrary injustice. His first act of despotism has already been recorded in his counter-order of Robert's armament to go to his sister's assistance: the second, and most signal of all, was a written notice to Albert de la Lance to quit his house, and the domain of Barsas, within three days from the date of it; under pain, in case of non-compliance, of being turned out, and of the confiscation of his property. The notice was sent in due form, and given into his own hands. Albert returned no other reply than that he would "comply with the insolent request of the Count de Barsas." The trusty messenger brought it verbatim.

'So proud was he of this exhibition of authority, that he boasted of it to every one, and the consequence was, that the report immediately spread, and that the peaceful Maurice Adellien was informed that the amiable and popular tenant of the Count de Barsas was ordered to quit in a manner to put him to the greatest inconvenience, and to throw over his reputation a cloud which could only be dis-

sipated by a compliment equal to the affront offered him; for it could not be expected that every one would have the justice to lay the odium upon the new Count. Maurice Adellien immediately offered him, by means of his bailiff, a comfortable house with necessary appurtenances, situated on his estate, and contiguous to the domain of his haughty neighbour. The offer was too welcome to be declined, and was accordingly closed with, after the usual preliminaries concerning rent and other matters connected with the taking of a house.

The situation of this habitation was in every respect superior to the one which he held of the Count de Barsas; the house was better, the gardens exceedingly neat, and the hand of art had beautifully decorated what the matchless elegance of nature had done towards its embellishment.

It stood upon a considerable eminence, commanding the variegated scenes of the surrounding country, of the two proud castles, and of the picturesque windings of the

limpid Loire. Its architecture was neither costly nor uncommon, but the infinite taste which was displayed in its improvements rendered it, of all others, the most desirable residence for Albert de la Lance, and the likeliest to contribute to his happiness.

It was furnished with neatness and simplicity, and every thing had been attended to which could secure the comfort of its occupier. It was here that Maurice Adellien was to have finished his useful career and have paid the tribute of nature, had he not so unexpectedly become possessed of the wealth and importance of his late masters. The only request which was made to Albert, and the only condition to which he was bound, was to allow the gardener, and persons employed about the grounds, to continue their improvements at his landlord's expense, who attached particular value to every object connected with a place to which he had for many years directed his leisure, and which was to have been his last earthly dwelling.

When a man advanced in life contemplates

the few years which in the common course of nature he has to live, and thinks that the place he has selected for his residence will be the one from which he will depart for another world, the thought connects itself with superior ideas, and carries with it a fond solicitude which no other idea on this side the grave is capable of creating.

The Count de Barsas was not a little mortified by his tenant's willingness to leave his dwelling; he hoped to have had a better opportunity to vent his spleen, by refusing to comply with his notice. The priest had, in this respect, raised his hopes to the highest pitch, and pledged himself for his resistance, but he knew not the extent of Albert's prudence, and gave no credit to the honourable rectitude of his principles.

In less than twenty-four hours from the receiving of the notice, Albert de la Lance had paid his rent, and removed his servants, goods, and cattle, from the domain of Barsas, given up possession to the steward of the domain, and become the tenant of the magnanimous Mau-

rice Adellien, who, in the mean time, had ordered every thing to be got in complete order to receive him, and sent from the castle such necessaries as would be wanted until the bustle of removal should have subsided.

These attentions were not lost upon the person to whom they were shown; his warmth of heart was a sure pledge of gratitude.

When he came to the sitting room window of his new habitation, he was amazed with the beauty of the scenery; on the right he could see the castle of the illustrious Montfort's rising in majestic height from the rolling waters, and surrounded with woods and fastnesses which seemed to defy the approach of hostile force. On the left the less strong castle of the haughtier Counts of Barsas, of which the surrounding scenery, though beautiful, was much inferior to the other. But if, for a moment, these scenes cheered his drooping spirits, he was wretched indeed when he dwelt upon the many painful remembrances which they created.

As he was meditating upon his sufferings

they were suddenly broken off by the entrance of Robert, who hearing of his sudden removal, came to congratulate him, and to inform him of the events which had succeeded each other so rapidly since their last meeting.

He was no less astonished than his friend, when he beheld the beauties of the place, and the elegant simplicity of the house and furniture. He warmly congratulated him upon the removal, and particularly upon a change of landlords. Robert was not aware until he called at his friend's former habitation, and found it in the possession of the steward, of the conduct of which his brother had been guilty; he had scrupulously kept it from him, and having little communication with the other inmates of the castle, he had not heard it from any other person.

Owing to the preparations and arrangements necessary for his father's funeral, which had taken place on the preceding day, he was prevented calling upon Albert, who would have remained in total ignorance of Isabel's fate had not Dominick sought comfort in his sor-

rows by confiding them to a feeling breast, and informed him of every circumstance which had come to his knowledge.

It was a relief to Robert to find that the tale which he had to tell had already been fully related. Albert was nevertheless very anxious to hear many interesting particulars which had escaped the good man's remembrance, or which had, perhaps, not reached his ear. He listened to them with lively attention, and frequently shed tears as he mentioned the name of the object of his affections.

In mutual converse they passed the remainder of the day, and Robert endeavoured to enliven himself and his friend, by proposing the arrangement of his books and other appendages of his study. Fond of the same pursuits, gifted with kindred tempers, and esteeming each other's society one of the blessings of life, they wanted neither inclination to combine their occupations or to give them interest.

• By the setting of the first watch Robert returned to the castle, and proceeded to his own

apartment, where in his present unhappy state he passed most of his time.

The pleasure Albert de la Lance had expressed at Isabel's safety under the patronage of the amiable Duchess de Briançon afforded him great consolation, for he feared lest he might think her removal to have been occasioned by the fear of her returning to his neighbourhood, and absurd as was the idea, he could not banish it from his mind until he had personal assurances that it was, of all others, the step which he considered as best adapted to her comfort and safety.

The dreaded time for disclosing her restoration to the Countess was at hand, and was more feared than any duty which it could have fallen to his lot to perform. It was nevertheless imperious, and in the morning Robert sent to know whether he could be admitted into her chamber upon particular business.

The Countess was consoling herself with the Abbé's conversation when the message was delivered; his brow gathered in thick folds, and the more he observed the Countess study his

looks, the more he pictured with his forehead the expressions of his displeasure. There was no resisting the influence of this interpretation, she therefore returned for answer that she would see her son in the afternoon. The priest was evidently delighted, and commended his patroness for her manner of repelling the presumption of her children, and the propriety of teaching them the respect due to parents, by naming her own time.

Such was the power which the crafty confessor had usurped on the mind of a woman, who, had she been less vain and bigotted to her own opinions, might have made her children comfortable, although it was quite out of her power, without a total change of her character, to make them completely happy.

In these first days of her widowhood it would naturally have been supposed that she would have sought consolation in the society of her family, and by emptying the overflowings of her heart into their commiserating bosoms; it was indeed otherwise, for she derived none of those consolations from them, which other

parents would have done, and sought the company of one, and only one of her children, and he was the enemy, the persecutor of the rest.

Adrien had no affection for his brother or sister, he considered them as unnecessary beings, and as persons who were of no use but to lessen his fortune, by drawing from the stock that portion which the laws of the land awarded them, and which, though considerable, was all they had any prospect to inherit from the great wealth of their father, which might have afforded them a much larger share.

Nothing that could, by any means, be taken from them, would they ever have, for the young Count grew mercenary as he became rich, and as he loved none so well as himself, he would gladly have filled his coffers at the expense of those for whom he could feel no affection.

These sentiments were the fruits of the Abbé's industry, he had laboured hard to graft them upon the young tree, and had succeeded to the fullest of his wishes. It followed as a matter of course, that by raising a particular feeling in the heart of his pupil he must be

looked up to as the author of it, and the more this feeling was indulged the more he could hope to heighten himself in his opinion. His views were even more than prosperous, he already reaped the full harvest of his labours, for he was consulted on every occasion, and where in a line of conduct a doubt remained to be marked, or an obstacle to be removed, the priest was consulted, his opinion was decisive, and his advice was invariably followed.

Had Robert possessed one-twentieth part of his influence with his mother or brother, his sister's safety might have been ensured, her happiness would perhaps have followed, and he would consequently have had nothing to wish for.

But by the influence of confessional priest-craft, every prospect of the kind was blasted, every hope crushed in its birth. It would have been a death-blow to his own importance; and he proved he would not forego one *iota* of his power to promote their best interests.

Aware as Robert was of the situation in

which he was so unfortunately placed, his only prospect was in withdrawing himself from the castle, and by claiming the property which in right of inheritance belonged to him, to render himself independent of his worthless brother; but his first anxiety was to provide a home for Isabel, as it was beyond the range of human possibilities, that she should ever be moderately comfortable in the castle of Barsas.

After keeping Robert waiting until the afternoon, his mother sent for him. She was alone, and having inquired very affectionately about her health, and received but ungracious answers in return, he communicated the intelligence which he had so long wished to make known. The Countess could not help betraying much satisfaction at the news of Isabel's return, but the story of the manner in which she was restored to liberty appeared but a tale made up to deceive her, and she protested most violently against her son's attacks upon the Marquis de Morbiere, which she declared to be false and groundless. All he could say or do was ineffectual; she *would*

not be persuaded, and accused her daughter of having connived in her being carried off.

Robert remonstrated with increasing warmth, and he was truly eloquent in his pleadings, but all was useless; not a word was believed. The interference of the ghost the Countess considered as too awful ever to have taken place on behalf of any human being, and in order to convince her son of the absurdity of the story, she sent for the priest to give his opinion.

In vain did Robert resist his interference; the Countess represented his duty, and her maternal prerogatives; he questioned neither, and was obliged to submit. The priest was therefore sent for, and instantly made his appearance.

If the Abbé ever displayed the extent of his native insolence, it was on this occasion; he entered the room in the bustling manner of a minister of state who comes to give a brief reply to the many memorials which have been presented to him, which he has never read, and which are only regarded according to the rank of the memorialist. He made his best

bow to the Countess, and merely bent to her son.

The Countess opened the business by repeating what she had just been told, and concluded with, "Do you think it probable that the spectre would go to my daughter's assistance, and carry her away by means of a supernatural animal?"

"Certainly not," said the priest, who discovered the drift of the question; "we know by the evidence of our own eyes (the Virgin defend us) that there are such things as ghosts; we read of them, and their being is not to be doubted; nor can there be a question that this castle is haunted by the spectre of the Count de Montfort, and that it haunts the environs of the neighbouring castle, where it has been seen by hundreds. But the story you relate, I look upon as perfectly absurd, and only fabricated to deceive you."

"I must own I believe so," said the Countess.

"It is therefore useless for me to say a word more," quoth Robert. "As you think Isabel capable of falsehood, and as I believe she utters

uothing but what is strictly true, we cannot agree."

"WE!" exclaimed the priest, with an air of astonishment; "do you put yourself on a footing with your mother?"

"Certainly, Sir," replied the indignant Robert.

"Leave my presence," cried the Countess, "I will not bear your insolence."

"You will first please to tell me what your intentions are towards my sister," said Robert, calmly. "It is necessary you should come to some determination, that she may have a home."

"She is unworthy of my notice," replied the Countess; "she may go where she likes, and with whom she likes. You do not, I hope, suppose me capable of receiving a girl who eloped from her father's castle?"

"Since such is your impression," said Robert with commanding seriousness, "it is useless for me to vindicate her, or to plead her cause; she is innocent in heart and soul; the friends with whom she is, know how to appreciate her

virtue, and will keep her as long as she may wish to stay with them."

"Then she had better remain where she is," said the Countess; "in short she may please herself, for she has rendered herself unworthy of me. Don't you think me right?" turning to the priest.

"Perfectly!" he replied, "you cannot in honour do otherwise."

Determined to hear no more, Robert darted out of the room, leaving his mother and the priest to canvass the subject with each other.

CHAPTER IV.

SEVERAL days passed away without producing any thing new at either of the castles. Robert was in great hopes that his mother's good sense would get the better of her error and that she would provide for the future comfort of his sister; but they were not realized, and he determined to pay the Duchess de Briançon a visit in order to consult with Isabel on the best course to pursue in the distressing predicament in which they were placed.

Albert de la Lance looked forward to his journey with anxious solicitude, as his friend promised to be the bearer of a packet to Isabel, from whom he hoped to hear on his return. In the mean time he occupied himself with arranging his new habitation, classing his large collection of books, and placing them in the

order in which they stood in his former residence.

The garden and grounds were delightfully laid out, and much of his leisure was spent in becoming acquainted with their contents, for among his other acquisitions he was deeply versed in natural history, and had a particular predilection in favour of botany. In this respect the garden which excited his attention was well suited to his inclinations, being amply stocked with all kinds of native and foreign productions. Maurice Adellien had during the whole of his life devoted much of his time to this particular pursuit, and the late Countess de Montfort used to delight in watching the progress of his toils, and the success of his experiments. She was, as himself, a first rate botanist, and had assembled a vast collection of plants which had been much increased and improved since her death by the present owner of the castle.

From the servants who were left for the management of the grounds Albert received the greatest civility, and his wishes were attended

to with a promptitude which soon made him lose that shyness which every one more or less feels in requiring the services of other persons' servants. Nothing but an easy heart and mind was now wanting to his happiness; he was nevertheless comfortable, and the assurance of being sincerely and unalterably beloved of Isabel softened the pangs which he otherwise would have felt to a much more painful degree. Robert's having resumed his daily visits was a great source of comfort, as he could communicate his feelings to him with the certainty of his entering into them. On the other hand, Robert made him acquainted with every thing that happened to him, and delighted to talk over his love for the fascinating mistress of his affections.

Maurice Adellien went on in the same benevolent and useful way as he had done from the first moment of his becoming master of the domain of Montfort. His life was one series of charity and goodness, and he was literally adored. He continued to live in retirement, and resisted every effort of the neighbouring noblesse to bring him into society. Under his

constant care, and prudent management, he diffused prosperity on every side; the tenant, as the labourer, reaped the benefit of his paternal solicitude.

Adrien de Barsas was not gifted with the same desire of making his fellow creatures happy. His own selfish inclinations were enough for him to attend to, they occupied the whole of his time, and engrossed his entire attention.

He had no idea of increasing his wealth by improving the condition of his vassals; on the contrary, he fancied they had already too many privileges, and proposed a general curtail of their profits by an increase of rent. As a preliminary step to the introduction of this new system he caused, immediately after his father's death, a notice to be served upon every tenant, declaring his intention to increase their rents and fines, and not to suffer them to retain their estates should they refuse compliance with the terms proposed. In all his innovations and arbitrary measures he was advised and supported by the priest,

whose total ignorance of the subject was enough to ruin the person who had the misfortune to allow himself to be guided by him. As with other ignorant persons, his self-sufficient arrogance was beyond sufferance, and he gave his opinion, however absurd it might be, with a tone of importance which was neither suited to his rank or his calling: he was nevertheless the Count's oracle.

The aged Dominick, who had been so kindly treated by his young mistress, and who was placed by her in a situation which would have insured the happiness of the remainder of his life, had events been less unpropitious, was reduced to a blank letter and was nobody's servant. It was quite enough that he had been the near attendant of Isabel, that he should be turned away by every other member of the family save Robert, upon whom he looked with mingled affection and respect. Whenever he presented himself before the Countess, she repulsed him with indignant epithets, and accused him of having assisted in the *elopement* of her daughter, for she persisted in her

having gone off, and would hear no one to the contrary. Dominick, like a sensible man, avoided frequent repetitions of these occurrences by keeping out of her way, and passed the heavy hours in the solitude of Isabel's apartment, where, deprived of all that made it cheerful and happy, he sorrowed away in lonely lamentations.

The same reason which induced the Countess to be so cruel to the faithful old man, stirred up her unamiable son, who did all he could to imbitter his life. There was so much slavery in the servitude of those days, that it was useless for a menial to complain; it would have been looked upon as an act of treason, and have called down more mighty displeasure and greater hardships than the strength of a man of Dominick's years could have borne. It was therefore the more cruel to use them ill and aggravate the natural hardness of their fate. Adrien was not a man to look into these things, such minutiæ were below his notice; he preferred pompous displays of his own superior nature and the vain boast of those

riches and possessions which, though they descended in right of blood, were unearned and undeserved.

Dominick, humble as he was, could have taught his master more than one lesson which would have been useful to him to learn. He could have pointed out the duties of Christian charity, the necessity of humility, the comfort of virtue, and the sentiments of a grateful heart. Two or three of these qualities would greatly have improved the Count de Barsas, who was deficient of them all.

Robert did all he could to make the faithful old man as comfortable as the loss of his mistress and daughter could allow; but his power was very limited and what he did was done by stealth, lest more hardships should be imagined against him. To avoid the system of persecution which began to be exercised in this little aristocracy, he migrated as much as possible to the less polluted parts, and kept within the range of the galleries extending from Robert's to Isabel's apartments.

It generally happens that when masters are

out of temper, or cruel in their dispositions, that the same feeling descends to every part of the establishment, and that nothing, not even harmless animals, escape maltreatment. It was so at the castle of Barsas, for although the better tempers were least ready to take fire, the conflagration nevertheless followed, and blaze to blaze communicated the destruction of good understanding throughout the vast fabric. Even the poor scullions were not exempt; they were cheated of their dues; the delicate morsels which sometimes fell to their share were snatched up by the head cooks and thrown of preference into the fire or the wash-tub. Persecution began upwards, and went rapidly down through every branch of the establishment, and none escaped without a share of ill-usage. It may well be supposed that there was no happiness or comfort in the castle of Barsas.

The Marquis de Morbiere remained at his castle, too fearful of detection to venture upon further enormities, and too suspicious to appoint a successor to Barbara, without making

himself thoroughly acquainted with the candidate's real worth. Until the situation should be filled it was impossible for him to attempt any further step unless he chose to be his own jailor. The place was not calculated for Carl; he would be a dangerous man in it, and might make himself, without difficulty, master of as much power as he chose to assume.

To Fortmain there were many objections which were seen by the Marquis, although he could not make them evident to Carl. Had the place been offered to him he might, perhaps, have accepted it for prudential motives; but not without the greatest reluctance, however lucrative it might be. His object has already been explained, and it was with that honourable feeling that he might have been led to accept a place so calculated to excite his horror and disgust.

Owing to Barbara's death there was for a time a suspension of hostilities, yet all parties were on the alert, and would not allow themselves to be taken by surprise. The Marquis

was far from having relinquished his hopes of conquests. Carl with similar views kept the plot alive, and it was so mature and well contrived that it could at any time be put into execution.

Fortmain could not be prevailed upon by the Marquis to remain in his service; he returned to the castle of Barsas, and kept his secret so perfectly within his own breast that no one could learn the least thing which could even serve as a clue to make them suppose that he was connected with the carrying off of Isabel and her maid. It was believed he had been seeing some relations.

The Marquis watched with anxiety a favourable opportunity for making inquiries concerning the fugitives; it was some days before he learned any particulars which might somewhat clear up the mystery of their flight, and inform him of the place to which they had bent their way.

The Duchess's stop at the Croix d'Or was too great an adventure not to be circulated with all possible industry by the indefatigable

aubergiste. Maître Podevin had the fault of his calling, he repeated every word he heard, and if perchance he was any ways concerned, he invariably gave additional savour to his wine, by telling his story. In this way he managed to acquire some notoriety among those of his neighbours who did not like the sameliness of a country life. The honour that had been done his house, and the adventure which had caused him so much wonder, were too remarkable to be forgotten, and too well calculated to make his guests ask for an extra cup of wine to hear the story out, not to repeat it on every possible occasion. Thanks to Podevin and his chattering wife the tale got wind, was enlarged upon, and every thick-headed countryman who could not recollect the whole of it, rather than make a lame story, added so much more as rendered it palatable to himself and suitable to the credulity of his hearers.

The names of the parties were by no means the easiest to recollect, and it was here they blundered most. In very few hours they were forgotten, and the narrative would have lost all

its zest had it not been for the lucky *chose* which always came admirably *à propos* to relieve them in the dilemma. From *Duchesse de Briançon* and *Mademoiselle Susanne, sa fille*, they made, *Madame la Duchesse de chose, et Mademoiselle chose, sa fille;* in the like manner Isabel and her maid became *Mesdemoiselles chose*, and *chose* helped them out of the scrape to the satisfaction of their amazed hearers. What would France have done for the last ten centuries if it had not been for *chose?* It is the national *passe-par-tout*, for it is not only applicable to persons, but to things, to which, literally speaking, it more properly belongs; it is therefore a universal assistant, and puts a finish to a broken story, which can be produced by nothing short of it.

The adventure at the inn had undergone this metamorphosis before it reached the ears of Carl, who as he was swilling down a copious cup of wine at a little *cabaret* in the neighbourhood of the castle of Morbiere heard the story in which he was so deeply interested:

he paused and listened; lowered the cup, and looked fearfully at all around him, thinking himself suspected, and that it was but a snare to detect him. After a moment's hesitation his impudence got the better of his fears, and he addressed the speaker, who was personally known to him, in order to ascertain whether the tale was really the same, and to discover what had become of the captives. As to names, the speaker could only tell him that the elderly lady was the Duchess of *chose*, and that she was accompanied by two young ladies, that another young lady had been brought to the inn by a farmer from the neighbourhood of the castle of Morbiere, and that when the Duchess stopped to bait at the Croix d'Or, the young ladies unexpectedly met, weeped in each other's arms, and appeared as if they had suffered some great disaster. He ended by stating that the Duchess was making for her castle. This was as much information as Carl wanted; night was fast coming on, and when it was dark enough to ensure his not

being seen, he returned to the castle to inform his master of the great discovery he had made.

The Marquis de Morbiere was not a little alarmed when he beheld Carl enter by the secret communication into his room, he fancied treachery was going on, and that his castle was invaded. Carl's looks gave some grounds for fear, for his smile shaped itself more to the expression of terror, than to the pleasing contraction of the muscles which so fully conveys the impression of the mind.

"What now, Carl?" said the Marquis in a hurried tone of voice, and looking his man full in the face; "what has happened!"

"Softly, Sir, softly," replied Carl; "there's fun to be had still."

"What do you mean?" said the Marquis; rising at the same time from his chair, and approaching him, as if to catch the very vibration of his words.

"I know where the girls are," replied the man.

"You're playing the fool again," said his master peevishly.

"You're the fool for not believing," quoth Carl; "what I tell you is true, and I repeat it, I know where the girls are."

"Where then?" exclaimed the Marquis.

"That's another thing," replied Carl; "nothing for nothing, that's my maxim; you must down with it if you wish to know."

"Name your price," said the Marquis.

"Any thing you like," quoth Carl.

Being satisfied in this respect he related the story he had heard at the inn, and needed no argument to persuade his employer that the Duchess *de chose* and the other ladies were in reality the persons of whom he was in search.

In order to gain more certain information it was agreed that Carl should sally out early in the morning and bestride his horse for the Croix d'Or, to which his master sent him to collect as much more information as it would be in his power to gain. The preliminaries

being settled he took his leave and retired to prepare for the expedition.

The Marquis de Morbiere was not the least surprised at hearing that Isabel had put herself under the protection of the Duchess de Briançon, but, if it should turn out to be the fact he deemed it almost a death-blow to his hopes, as there would be no possibility of carrying her off as he had done at the castle of Barsas. The great and incomprehensible mystery was the manner in which the captives escaped; this he could by no means understand, or account for. The castle was well surrounded with walls, and access to the forsaken part was much more difficult than to any other, as he had strengthened and repaired it with a view to resist the powers of hostile force in case satisfaction should be demanded for the foul deeds which had there been done.

His mind was naturally in a state of constant agitation; the numberless crimes of which he had been guilty kept awake a certain disagreeable feeling which even assailed him in

times of mirth and merriment; he could not divest himself of it, it pursued him in all places, and at all seasons: he resisted it to the utmost of his power, but his endeavours were useless and the more he thought of a counter-expedient, the more these feelings crowded upon his restless brain.

The image of the dreaded spectre was ever present to his eyes: in the dead of night, in the bright glare of day, in the storm and calm, the remembrance of the ghost of the murdered Montfort haunted him. He tried in vain to overcome his weakness, and to banish the thought from his mind, but it was impossible. The society of his jester, which had formerly kept off the stings of conscience, had not lost all its attractions; but it was wholly inadequate to the task of dismissing the remembrance of the Spirit from his mind, and indeed he seldom mentioned it, fearing that he might suspect him of the crimes which had brought upon him the ghost's anger. The jester kept his own counsel, well knowing that he would stand a fair chance of the iron hoop

and chain in the dungeon below, if he betrayed the secret on which depended the safety of his Margaret by giving the slightest intimation of his knowledge of his master's monstrous conduct.

Duplicity is seldom commendable, and there are few circumstances in life which can defend its practice, but it is sometimes excusable, and even in a few cases worthy of praise. The use which Baba made of it must at a future time, when the truth came to light, have gained him the admiration of all who knew him. The Marquis de Morbiere's duplicity brought upon him the hatred and contempt of the world: such is the difference which circumstances are capable of producing.

When Baba was first hired, and for some years after, he had not the slightest proof of guilt to bring home to his master, although report said much, and sundry tales were related, to which he listened without inclination to give them credit. He was then, in the full meaning of the word, a jester; he lived well, was merry, full of pleasantry and

wit, impertinent when he liked, satirical, facetious, and good-humoured. The discovery he made between the doors at the castle of Barsas quite altered him; his service became irksome; he was humiliated by being the toy of a criminal nobleman, and could no longer find in his heart those drolleries which had in former days made him the delight of society. The very ease of his life lost its wonted charm: toil would have been preferable to him in a more honourable place.

His situation, however, was so critical, that he could not loosen himself from it; he had saved the life of Albert de la Lance and the fame of his Margaret. He inwardly enjoyed his triumph, content to look to uncertain times for reward, and determined to retain his present power until both should be beyond the evil range of the Marquis's machinations. "There is a time for all things," said Baba to himself, "we shall be happier still; but when, time alone can tell!" Time indeed tells strange things, and brings events to pass which were not so much as thought of.

Baba, who was an excellent logician, did not give way without thinking; and if he dreaded a warrior's sword, or a priest's cassock, he was possessed of a sound head and good understanding, a mind capable of superior ideas, and an upright heart.

From the hour of his saving Margaret, he felt happier than he had been for many weeks; the worthiness of the action endeared him to himself, and wore off a little of the odium which he thought attached to his employment. His sentiments for her had successfully opened his eyes to the humiliating character of a jester, and so sickened him of it, that he sighed for the time when he could pack up his little all, and leave the detested service which had now lost all its charms.

When in the Marquis's company he assumed an air of gaiety which happily escaped detection, and so put him off his guard, that he did not entertain the slightest suspicion of his knowing the course of life to which he was addicted, and of being aware of what had befallen the unfortunate females who so miracu-

lously escaped from his grasp. In order to keep his jester's mind in the same frame, and to avert all questions which might revert to the affairs of the castle of Barsas, the Marquis pretended to be unusually cheerful, and acted the same double game towards his servant, as the servant did towards his master.

Knowing, as Baba did, the cause of his gracious conduct, he paid him in his own coin, and availed himself, with the greatest address, of the advantage thus afforded him.

CHAPTER V.

A FEW days after Robert's misunderstanding with the Countess his mother, on account of the cruelty of her conduct towards her ill-fated daughter, he determined to make another attempt, to endeavour to bring her from her error, and prevail upon her to allow Isabel to return to the castle.

If it was possible to be worse received than he was on his first trial, it was on the present occasion, when she exhibited a rancour and hardness of heart which clearly proved to him that no hope was left.

What to do in the business was more than he could imagine, and he thought female advice was necessary before he fixed upon any line of conduct for himself, or his sister. He therefore determined to pay his intended visit to the castle of Briançon; and having informed his mother of his near departure, took leave

of her, and, attended by one servant only, sat out on his journey.

Albert de la Lance had on the previous evening entrusted to his care the packet of which he had promised to be the bearer, and desired him, in addition, to assure Isabel of the constancy and unalterableness of his love. The affection which Robert bore the amiable Susan made him a fit interpreter of his friend's sentiments, and he promised to speak the language of the heart, and say to her all the endearing things in his power.

Had Robert and his friend been born of the same blood, they could not have been more attached to each other. Theirs was not that weak regard which wastes in words, and splits on the rock of absence or adversity. It was affection they felt; real, genuine affection, unmixed with any feeling of which they would not have had reason to be proud. They looked upon each other as husbands elect, both in the main point situated alike, though in truth the one was infinitely better off than the other. They loved, however, and they

knew their sentiments were not repaid with ingratitude.

Since the interference of Adrien in the courtyard, not a word had been exchanged between the brothers. The fault was not Robert's, for he freely forgave him his ill conduct; but his brother passed him as a perfect stranger, and this was more than any man of spirit could bear He therefore left the castle without taking leave of him.

Robert had not galloped far when his notice was attracted by his old friend the wood-cutter, who seeing him bent on a journey came forward to the roadside.

"Ah! master Robert," said the aged man, looking pitifully at him, "there's more evil about, I see; we had but one friend left, and he is going."

"I shall soon be back again," said Robert, "you are not going to lose me."

"I don't know that," said the wood-cutter, wiping a tear from each of his eyes; "the winds of this season have been of evil blowing. I know not what there's about, but there's some-

thing I don't like. You must not leave us, Sir."

"I am going to see my sister," quoth Robert, in hopes of quieting the wood-cutter's fears.

"The better for you, master Robert," said the other; "and the worse for us; better had it been that she came here. Do you bring her back again?"

"Not yet," replied Robert.

"Then there's no good about yet," quoth the man. "Well, well, we poor old people will cry our eyes out before we smile again; sad days, master Robert, sad days."

"Sad days indeed," said Robert to himself.

"Ride on then," continued the wood-cutter; "and since you must go, God go with you and speed your journey. Remember how many will pray for your return." So saying, he turned away and walked back to his work without waiting for Robert's reply.

Robert again darted forward, and proceeded on his journey, full of the loved object to which he was travelling, and of the hope of soon seeing his sister.

Arrived at the Croix d'Or, he pulled up. The aubergiste, ever awake to the sound of horses' hoof, and well guessing that the cavalier who was so distant heard, would not ride by without doing homage to his cheer, stood out and greeted him as he halted, and held the off-side stirrup for him to dismount.

" Welcome, Sir Knight; the best of wine and the best of corn are at your service here, for the night, I hope."

Robert answered with his usual good-nature, " Not so, good friend; better cheer than yours I know I cannot find on this road; your wine and corn my steed and I will find, in truth, quite welcome; lead the way, and give me of your best."

His best the jolly host soon produced, and filled a cup to the brim. " There, Sir Knight," said he; " may your heart never ache 'till you get better wine than this. The same, the other day, cheered a Duchess and three fair damsels."

" Only two, good host," said Robert, smiling.

" Aye, you know the lady then," quoth Po-

devin; "but Sir Knight, you're vastly out, for sure as this wine is good, three fair damsels were they."

"You joke me, my honest host," said Robert; "unless forsooth, the Duchess took her women within her coach."

"You're out, Sir Knight, you're out," cried the aubergiste.

"Then set me right," said Robert; "I think I'm on the right side yet; the Duchess, one; her daughter, two; and a damsel, three. I protest there were but three in all."

"Pardon me, Sir Knight," quoth the laughing host; "four indeed. I remember them full well. The Duchess, (bless me, I forget her name,) her fair daughter, a beautiful sick damsel, and this damsel's maid."

"Nonsense!" said Robert, "the lady had no maid."

"Vastly true," said the aubergiste; "she had none 'till she found her here, but here indeed she was."

"How came she here?" said Robert, who

began to think the man was really not mistaken."

"She came in croup that morning, behind honest la Bruyère, a farmer dwelling some four leagues from here. She was in a dismal state. We fancy some foul usage had been done her; for, poor thing, she cried right bitterly."

"Where did she come from?" said Robert.

"I did not hear the story over plain, but I think the farmer said she had escaped from a castle not far from here. I'm glad she's gone, poor soul, for there's a curious looking man within the bar, that puts more questions about her than he's any need to do."

"Where is he?" said Robert.

"Within the bar, Sir Knight; I've seen the man before, and if I'm not much mistaken he belongs to the Marquis de Morbiere. But I was told it as a profound secret, and hope you won't betray me."

"Not I, my good friend," said Robert; "tell me more about this man."

"He came here very early this morning, Sir," replied Podevin, "and said he was travelling.

You know, Sir, that we servants of the public are fond enough of news; well, I asked him some few questions, and where, with one answer and another, and a few questions again to boot, I led him on about the young damsel, for she's been all the news. He did not ask me things as other folk; no Sir Knight, not a bit, but he was anxious, and told me he had interest to know somewhat about the girl (as he called the damsel.) So, Sir, he was going on in this sort of way, when I heard you coming."

"What did you tell him?' said Robert.

"Why not over much, Sir Knight," quoth the aubergiste; "because in the course of trade, I had told him the story about the ladies as he was taking his cup of wine, but not such wine as you have got; no, Sir Knight, 'tis kept for better folk than he."

"I would like to see this man," said Robert. "Can you satisfy me?"

"You are right welcome to see him, Sir Knight," replied Podevin, "and I warrant you never saw the like; he's dreadful fierce looking, a better guest by day than night."

"So I should think by your description," said Robert; "nevertheless I would like to see him."

"Come, Sir," said Podevin, leading the way; "pray follow me."

The aubergiste bowed and scraped, and more than once felt his unshaven beard, as if to hide its roughness; Robert followed him into the bar, where sat Carl in deep converse with the landlady.

When Carl beheld Robert, whose features were quite familiar to him, he shrunk within himself as if to evade his accusing look; but he suddenly recollected himself, and not thinking it probable that his person should be known to him, ventured to look up.

It was Robert's intention to lead him into conversation, in hopes that he might betray himself; but he was deceived, for the cunning fellow made some slight excuse for going to look after his horse, saddled it, and paying what he deemed was the amount of his entertainment to the stable boy, he rode off at full speed.

"There he goes," exclaimed the astonished aubergiste. "He's off, Sir Knight!"

Robert would have mounted and have rode off after him; but he was gone towards the castle of Morbiere, and his own road branched off in a different direction. Pursuit was therefore abandoned, and he contented himself, although very reluctantly, with collecting all possible information from his hosts. He learnt with real joy that Margaret was restored to her mistress, and the circumstance was a great relief to his mind; but her escape was enveloped in deep mystery, no less incomprehensible to him than to Podevin, who was burning to unravel it.

When the horses were sufficiently rested, Robert and his man started amidst the salutations of his hosts and their attendants.

Although Robert was exceedingly well mounted, and his steed of extraordinary swiftness, we will travel faster than he did, and carry our readers at once to the splendid hall, in which he was ushered to the presence of his delighted and astonished friends. The first

transports at meeting Isabel and Susan so bewildered him, that he forgot all the attentions which were due to the good Duchess and her sons. Her affectionate congratulations and inquiries brought him to himself, and he apologised for his apparent rudeness: but there was no need of it, for what could be more grateful to a mother's feelings than to see such proofs of the future happiness of her child, in these expressions of his fondness for her.

Robert knew himself to be welcome, and the consequence was, that he felt quite at home. The young Duke was particularly kind in his reception, and his brother no less so.—It was not long before he turned the conversation to Margaret, and desired his sister to give him that information upon the subject which he had been unable to obtain from the inn-keeper. She accordingly related the circumstances of her escape; even more was done to satisfy his curiosity, Margaret was called to give an account of herself. When the faithful girl heard that Robert was in the castle, and wished to see her, she flew to the hall, and

would almost in the warmth of her feelings have flown into his arms, had she not timely recollected that she was but a servant. He shook her kindly by the hand, and listened with anxious ear to the tale which has already been related.

A distressing time was still in store for Isabel; she had to hear of her mother's cruelty, and of Adrien's unfeelingness. As for the priest's conduct, it neither excited astonishment or pain; she had long known him. But her being accused of elopement, and of having forfeited her claim upon the respect of the world, was truly heart-breaking, and was felt in all its bitterness. Robert wiped away her tears, and called off her attention from the distressing subject, by pulling out of his pocket the packet which Albert had intrusted to his care. This was indeed the greatest of all consolations, and having obtained the Duchess's permission to read it, she broke open the seal and would have kissed the dear name by which it was signed, had she been sure of not being seen.

Albert de la Lance was a man of very considerable talent, of great strength of imagination, and possessed of a warm and affectionate heart: his letters were always beautifully worded, and overflowing with elegant eloquence: they were of course doubly acceptable to Isabel, whose polished education was heightened by the purest taste, and who was a great admirer of refined literature.

"I wish we had him here," said the young Duke.

"I wish we had, my dear boy," replied his mother; then addressing herself to Isabel, she added, "You would not have any particular objection, I suppose?"

"Not I, indeed," exclaimed Isabel; "I would give the world to see him."

"Why did you not bring him with you?" said the younger Briançon to his friend.

"I was bold enough in coming here myself," said he. "I was not certain of being admitted."

"For shame, Robert!" exclaimed the Du-

chess; "you must henceforth consider this castle as your second home."

"My *second*," exclaimed Robert, smiling; "I have *no* home that I know of."

"Never mind," said the Duchess; "you shall remain with us; as for Isabel, we will not part with her until she marries."

"You will keep me long enough in that case," said Isabel, sighing deeply.

"I do not think so, my dear," said the Duchess.

The subject was a painful one, and as her wish was to keep up Isabel's spirits, and not to depress them, she began joking the Duke for never having yet been in love: by degrees she succeeded in enlivening the conversation, and all turned to cheerfulness.

Harassed as Isabel had been by a long series of sorrows, it required the greatest management to prevent her relapsing into the deplorable state of health to which she had lately been reduced. Peace of mind was the thing of all others which was to be attended to; in

order to insure it as much as circumstances would admit, the Duchess did all she could to turn her thoughts from every cause of grief, and by speaking of happier times with an apparent certainty of their coming to pass. Isabel felt her kindness, and was truly grateful for it; that she should not appear to frustrate her hopes, she exerted herself almost beyond her strength, and did all she could to look happy. Susan was a real comfort to her; she was a sincere friend, a cheerful companion, and a sound reasoner: not given to idle advice and high-flown schemes of romantic love; but to feelings of propriety, and notions of the most honourable kind: her heart and mind, therefore, were so congenial with Isabel's, that they agreed on every occasion.

Could she have done it with propriety, the Duchess de Briançon would have invited Albert de la Lance, for whom she had a great esteem, to come for some time to the castle. But such a step would have been waging inveterate war against the Countess de Barsas, with whom she had been many years intimately acquainted.

She was, nevertheless, determined not to throw any obstacle in the way of happiness; and should the young Duke invite him, she did not think she had any right to prevent his doing it, particularly as her own inclinations were so much in favour of it. Had she given him a hint, the invitation would have been that moment penned, but she purposely avoided it.

It is very questionable whether in case of Albert's being asked to the castle de Briançon, the Countess de Barsas would not have turned off her daughter for ever, and have attempted to prove from the innocent circumstance itself, that the falsehood so infamously propagated by the Marquis de Morbiere, of her voluntary elopement was true: she already thought as much, for Adrien was indefatigable in his assurances of the fact; and the priest, as on every other occasion, strengthened the belief by a chain of arguments, all tending to prove her being unworthy the affection of her mother, and of the provision to which she was entitled.

The doctor being a timid man, whose livelihood was at stake, dared say but little on the subject, although that little was invariably in favour of Isabel, of whom he entertained the highest opinion. Upon these occasions he brought down the whole artillery of the Count's spleen, which was let loose upon him in the most merciless manner, and so seconded by the Countess that he was obliged to retreat, and did not dare venture another engagement until the ferment occasioned by the former had subsided.

If three persons in the castle indulged themselves in assurances of the Marquis de Morbiere's innocence and of Isabel's guilt, they were the only one's; for all the attendants, of whatever description, were favourable to her, and considered their conduct as the most aggravated injustice.

Isabel had already been several times at the castle of Briançon, and had so won the hearts of its inmates, that her stay was hailed with the greatest glee, and all united in the hope that she would long continue to grace it with

her presence. Margaret loved to tell her amiable mistress of her popularity, and seemed more proud of it than if she had herself been the object of such general admiration.

The Duchess being of opinion that society would more effectually aid her young friend's recovery than what her medical attendants could prescribe, invited the Baron de Ferneuf, the veteran Baron de Rochefort, and several female friends, to spend a few weeks at the castle.

Although Isabel was fond of retirement, a favourable change was observable from the moment the scene was enlivened; she shed fewer tears, was more cheerful, and appeared to be easier about the future. Susan was foremost in observing the amendment, which acted so forcibly upon her own spirits, that she began to resume all her native *naïveté*.

In the Baron de Ferneuf they had a most powerful auxiliary, it was impossible to be dull in his company, and yet he was capable of entering into the softest feelings of the human heart. He had nursed Isabel when she was

but an infant, and endeared himself to her in maturer years by his infinite kindness and benevolence. The Baron de Rochefort was likewise a great favourite, but his dispositions were not the same as his friend's. Brave as his sword, he feared nothing, nor even understood how it was possible for a man to be otherwise. During the last and present reign he distinguished himself by exploits of extraordinary valour, thinking that no death became a soldier so well as that which was to be met in the field. His notions of honour were so often canvassed by his numberless admirers, that they became quite proverbial; and it was in the wide circle to which he was personally known deemed sufficient to say, "the veteran thinks so," for the opinion to be received as a law.

With one person Isabel was quite delighted; she had often met her in society, but had not known her intimately: she was thoroughly beautiful, of her own age, graceful, amiable, and, what is so seldom found with handsome

women, *perfectly unaffected.* The Count and Countess de Moselle idolized their child, for they had none but her, and with her a long line of noble ancestry was to terminate.

The Count was somewhat beyond the prime of life, his person was stately, and bore the proofs of his having long lived at court: he had that dignified ease, that fluency of speech, which can only be derived from good society. For some years he deemed himself truly unfortunate in not having a son, who might revive the expiring honours of his house, and hand down to posterity a name which stood amidst the highest of France: but Mary's unfolding charms reconciled her parents by degrees to their disappointment, and in process of time they became so fond of her, that had a son been born to them he would probably have been looked upon as an intruder. Mary was no less attached to them; they studied her comfort in every thing, and were never so happy as when they could contribute to the felicity of their child. Far from spoiling her by excessive in-

dulgence, they contributed to sweeten her temper, if it was possible to do more in that respect than nature itself had done for her.

Although the Duchess de Briançon joked the young Duke for never having been in love, some symptoms of a lurking flame began to be visible. On the young lady's side it was evident that no dislike existed, and his own particular attention, his anxiety lest she should catch cold by the night air, and a thousand little trifles which none but lovers think of, betrayed the secret which his best endeavours were unable to conceal.

CHAPTER VI.

Upwards of six months passed on in a continued succession of pleasures and change of company, from which Isabel derived but little comfort. Her health, it is true, improved so much that she recovered her colour and bodily strength; but her mind was uneasy, and her long absence from Albert de la Lance preyed deeply on her spirits. From time to time Robert went to the castle of Barsas, and at each journey was the bearer of letters to and from his sister and Albert. Consoling as these letters were, they were not to be compared with the delight which would have been derived from personal interviews; and the constant fear in which they were of some desperate attack from the unrelenting Morbiere, threw a damp on the comfort derived from them.

In each of his journies Robert endeavoured

to alter his mother's opinion of her innocent daughter, but his efforts were ineffectual; the poison was too deeply lodged ever to be removed, and she was rendered the more callous by a visit which the Marquis had presumed to pay Adrian, in which he was received with more than usual complaisancy. He only stayed a few days at the castle of Barsas, and those few days were artfully employed in widening the breach between parent and child, and becoming acquainted with those particulars which could best assist him in a second attempt upon the unfortunate Isabel.

During his last stay with his mother, Robert asked and obtained her reluctant consent to his alliance with the truly amiable Susan de Briançon. The moment he overcame the obstacles which the Countess laid in the way of his happiness, he returned to the castle of his future mother-in law, who received the news of his success with sincere joy. Susan thought there could not be any merit in concealing a praiseworthy feeling, she therefore flew into her mother's arms the moment Robert

communicated the happy tidings to her, pouring into them the effusions of a grateful heart for the bliss which was insured her in a good and affectionate husband.

The Duchess loved Robert too well to feel any disinclination to their speedy union; for she thought that when young people love each other, and are desirous of marrying, the sooner they do it the better, providing at least, that the match is an honourable one. Disparity of rank, or want of fortune, were, in her opinion, no just impediment, providing there was a respectable competency on either side, that by the neediness of both parties. they should not fall into poverty. She considered want as a never-failing antidote to conjugal felicity, and corrosive of the tenderest ties of society. It fortunately happened that in the present case, there was abundance, instead of deficiency, so that no real objection could have been urged by the Countess de Barsas, unless it were from dislike to the connexion. In this respect, she could not have aimed higher, so that the inclination to opposition which

she evinced must have originated in the badness of her temper, and total want of affection for Robert and Isabel, as she did not appear to partake, in the smallest degree, of the feelings which the Duchess exhibited on the occasion.

Splendid preparations were immediately made for the accommodation of the numerous visitors who were invited to celebrate the nuptials, and for the pastimes which were to succeed the wedding. The Countess de Barsas was invited, but declined on grounds of indisposition; not that there was the least foundation for the plea, as she never enjoyed better health.

The morning of the eventful day at length arrived, bringing with it the busiest scenes that had been witnessed since the union of the Duchess to her late husband. The weather was now cold and dreary, the trees had lost their enchanting foliage, the gardens were robbed of their beauteous ornaments. That the vassals and tenantry should not be deprived, by the inclemency of the season, of the pleasures for which they flocked to the castle, the

halls and offices were thrown open, sumptuous banquets laid out in various parts, capable of providing with the best of cheer for the conviviality of every one.

A little before mid-day the castle chapel was crowded to excess, and Robert de Barsas led his fair Susan to the altar. Like the modest snowdrop, enlivened by the rays of the rising sun, unassuming and meek, was Susan; she never looked so fascinating, and the innocent blush of extacy which rushed upon her cheek, as Robert breathed the tender name of "wife," added to her charms something infinitely lovely. Yet was Isabel more lovely still, and the beauty of Mary de Moselle was even clouded by her superiority. For their mutual comfort they thought not of themselves, they were unconscious of the many eyes that were fixed upon them, and deaf to what was said of them.

After the performance of the ceremony, the youthful pair received the hearty congratulations of their friends, and of the numberless vassals of the domain of Briançon, who

hurried forth to behold the lovely bride, and to see whether the man of her choice was really worthy of her.

One person alone was wanting to complete Robert's happiness; had Albert de la Lance been at his wedding, it would have added considerably to the blissful feelings which animated him; the cause of his absence being extreme illness, he had the more reason to regret it. Many persons who had heard of the valourous exploits of the Brown Knight at the tournament at the Castle of Barsas, were anxious to see him; Robert would have been truly happy in presenting him; but the wish was useless, as it was impossible for him to accept the invitation which the young Duke had given him, and which was couched in language too flattering to have been declined if he had been able to avail himself of it. In honour to Isabel the Brown Knight's health was drunk at each festive board, and at several a wish was added that he might soon become her husband.

Early in the evening, every part of the interior of the castle was splendidly illuminated,

and winter pastimes followed each other in rapid succession. The Duchess, the bride, Isabel, and Mary de Moselle, perambulated throughout the apartments, to see that nothing was wanting to the entertainment of the guests.

As Isabel proceeded through one of the halls, the rushing away of many persons, and faint screams were heard. Isabel, who had that very moment been seen, was looked for, but no where to be found; she was carried off! The most appalling consternation at once prevailed throughout the hall; the name of Isabel de Barsas rung on every side, and brought the Duchess, and many of the friends, within hearing of the cry to ascertain the cause of it. Susan, quite frantic with terror, hastened to her mother; Robert followed her, scarce knowing what he did, they called her by name, and their voices were re-echoed by hundreds more; but all was vain, the hapless Isabel de Barsas was beyond friendly aid.

Tears now succeeded smiles; sorrow took the place of mirth, consternation, doubt, and terror filled the hearts of every one.

It is scarcely possible for mortal man to suffer more than Robert; his misery was two-fold; the older ties of fraternal affection bid him mount his horse, and fly to his sister's assistance; his new-woven web bid him comfort his young bride; what was he to do in this heart-rending dilemma? Susan put an end to the struggle.

"Go, my Robert," said she; "seek our Isabel, and if it were possible that I should love you more than I do, it would be for bringing her back to me."

The gates of the castle having been thrown open from an early hour in the morning for the free ingress and egress for the vassals and friends invited to the wedding, no notice was taken of their passage, and at this dreadful moment no one could distinctly say whether Isabel had been carried through the gates or not. Some few persons observed an extraordinary rush towards the drawbridge, but nothing more was obtained which could serve as a clue for pursuit.

The night was dark and dreary; the woods

were thick about the castle, and intersected with numerous roads, so that it was impossible to fix upon one without the risk of the bandits having taken another.

As speedily as the necessary preparations would allow, full three score horsemen sat out on the hopeless search; Robert, the Baron de Ferneauf, the veteran, the young Duke and his brother, the Count de Moselle, and many of the noble visitors at the castle, passed the massive drawbridge, some fully armoured, others partly, others not armoured, but all well armed. The ladies with all the men who could not join the troop, went to the gates to see the brave knights set out, and besought them, by all they held most dear, to exert themselves in the recovery of the lovely Isabel. Susan behaved herself like a heroine; she encouraged the knights and handed Robert a ponderous battle-axe. "Take this, said she, it was my father's, it is worthy of you." He took the trusty weapon, pressed her to his breast, and departed. The port-cullis was then let down.

Such was the darkness of the night that

when the cavalcade passed the drawbridge they could scarce see each other. A short consultation now took place; the veteran proposed leading a party, assigned another to the Count de Moselle; one to the Baron de Ferneuf, another to the young Duke, and a like number to Robert de Barsas. They separated in five detachments, each consisting of about a dozen horsemen; successful or not, they were, after doing their best, to return to the castle.

The whole of the night was passed in fruitless search; the parties often crossed each other, exchanging watchwords as they came within hearing, for it was too dark to distinguish friend or foe; but every endeavour was unsuccessful, and after travelling till man and horse were fairly worn out with fatigue, the parties returned one by one to the castle, each giving hopes that the next might bring the captive back; the veteran was last but one; the last of all was Robert. When the detachments were called over, and that the return of every person was ascertained, all hope vanished; the Duchess, the bride, and her hus-

band were truly disconsolate. Not a soul within the castle walls tasted the sweets of rest during the whole of the night; until the return of the troop, the night was passed in anxious hope, the remainder was spent in mournful consultation. Poor Margaret was quite distracted; she was seen running through every part of the castle shrieking most lamentably, and rending the air with the uncontrollable accents of her misery.

The Marquis de Morbiere gave such proofs of what he was capable of doing in his former outrageous carrying off of Isabel, that it was impossible to doubt his being the bandit on the present occasion.

Morning returned without bringing any tidings of Isabel; it was therefore suggested by the Baron de Rochefort that a formal demand of her from the Marquis de Morbiere would be the most effectual means of ascertaining her fate; the proposal was too reasonable to be rejected; it was therefore settled that the Baron de Ferneuf, Robert de Barsas, and himself, should that day repair to the castle

of Morbiere to insist upon her restoration, and in case of not being satisfied they were to declare the immediate commencement of hostilities.

Again did Susan display the same generous spirit as before; it was she who proposed Robert's being one of the three; the Barons resisted, thinking it too hard upon so young a bride to be thus soon deprived of her husband; but she urged the propriety of his compliance in terms which heightened his love to adoration, and endeared her more than ever to those who had always entertained sincere regard for her.

In order to give strength to the declaration, a written manifesto was drawn up and signed by all the principal guests at the castle; nineteen nobles put their names to this formidable document, vowing to raze the castle of Morbiere to its foundation unless the specified terms should be instantly agreed to.

About noon the warder announced, by the shrill sound of his horn, that horses and attendants were ready.

Susan helped her husband buckle on his weighty armour, gave him his sword and battle-axe, then his helmet: all this she did with apparent spirit, but when the moment of parting came she could not conceal the big tears which rolled down her cheeks.

"I had better stay with you, my beloved Susan," said Robert; "I fear you are not well."

"Go, my Robert," said she; "it is the weakness of my sex and not want of resolution which betrays me. I beseech you, for the love of me, to endeavour to save our Isabel."

"I will do any thing you desire, but I have scarcely courage to leave you."

"It is only for a while; go, my Robert, and hasten home, you have now *a wife* to welcome you on your return."

"I go then, my own Susan, and may God grant you safety 'till my return." Pressed within each others arms, they more than once said farewell, and again returned; at length, however, the warden's horn sounded to horse,

and the valiant nobles, with thirty men in steel, passed the castle drawbridge.

To see her husband safe upon his way, as far as her sight could reach, Susan ascended one of the watch towers, and having caught, by the waving of her handkerchief, Robert's eye, they expressed, as long as the beloved object was discernible, the language of the heart in the wavings of the hand. The thick black clouds which overhung the castle, and spread far and wide on every side, soon checked this mute intercourse of love.

Fearless of cold, and of the bleak winds which blew through the battlements, Susan watched, still hoping to catch one more view of her beloved husband, but in vain. She then returned to her mother to keep off the gloom which, in defiance of her endeavours, overpowered her. Mary de Moselle was a great comfort on this trying occasion, as she exerted herself almost beyond her strength, to cheer the spirits of the amiable bride; but all she could do was insufficient to check the big

tears which stole down her cheeks. The Duchess needed her society as much as her magnanimous daughter, for she was truly afflicted, and reproached herself for ordering the gates to be thrown open, not that she supposed it possible that such a barefaced advantage would have been taken of her hospitality. The very time on which the horrid act was committed, blackened the crime to the deepest dye; he must indeed have been a heartless villain who dared be guilty of it!

The festivities which were to have lasted three successive days, were at once terminated at the desire of the higher and lower order of guests, who could not endure the idea of rejoicing and feasting when the Duchess and her family were thrown into affliction. They were, however, unwilling to depart, rather choosing to wait until the return of the knights; thinking it probable that they might have double cause for mirth, in the finding of the lost treasure.

Of all the opinions circulated throughout

the castle, one horrible as it was, had believers: many thought it likely that Isabel had been murdered. They had the indiscretion to communicate their fears to the Duchess; who did all she could, (and successfully,) to prevent the rumour reaching the ears of Susan, as it would naturally excite her fears for her husband, who, in case of his falling into the hands of the Marquis de Morbiere, would meet with a similar fate.

The Duchess was in great terror for the life of Isabel; the desperate measures to which he had the first time resorted, left little hope for the second; for he was dead to every kind of feeling, and nothing that diabolical malevolence could imagine would ever be wanting to complete his success.

The Count and Countess de Moselle felt like warm-hearted friends on the afflicting occasion; they did all they could to cheer the Duchess's spirits, and to prevent Susan's giving way to her increasing melancholy. Can any one be surprised that the bride should be unhappy, when nothing but misery had taken place since the

performance of the ceremony? No, indeed! Few women would have acted as she did, few would have had her disinterestedness, and as few would have been so generous. But these traits were characteristic, it was not the only occasion on which she had exhibited such amiable virtues.

During this time of sorrow, the Duchess discovered what she had never so much as suspected; the young Duke was rather more than commonly civil to Mary de Moselle, and appeared particularly attentive to all she said. Even to his mother he spoke of her with a degree of interest bordering on admiration. Such a change was altogether wonderful, as the Duke had not been near the Count's castle for a great length of time, and had never spoken of the young lady with warmer sentiments than other persons of her acquaintance.

The event which threw his guests into so much dismay, was not the last to strengthen the root of a tender *penchant*; as it brought them more together, calling forth the same sentiments and exciting the one to relieve the

fears of the other. The task of comforting Mary very luckily devolved upon him; it might be volunteered, but it was evidently acceptable. It is wonderful what a little time will do in some circumstances of life; a day made more progress in the courtship between the Duke and Mademoiselle de Moselle, than the many opportunities they had for two years before.

No connection could be more desirable on either side; the families were both illustrious, and possessing considerable wealth; in politics they sided together, and had been distinguished in the cabinet as in the field. Having but one child, and that child a daughter, it was natural to suppose that some opposition would be made on the side of the Count and Countess de Moselle, who by reason of their fond affection for her, would be very loath to part with her; but they were too desirous of her happiness to stand in the way of it, and the conquest might perhaps not be so difficult as it could be supposed.

In person and accomplishments, as in wealth

and title, the young Duke was an equally desirable match: many caps were turned at him, and there were at the very time several young ladiesvisiting at the castle, whose mamas had betrayed a wish that he would fall in love with their daughters. A young Duke possessed of wealth and comeliness was too rare a prize to remain unaimed at, and tempted many families, without the smallest chance of success, to put their daughters in the way, in hopes to captivate him. It was for this reason that his mother so continually joked him for never having been in love. She was not displeased by the discovery she made, as Mary had greatly endeared herself to her by her many amiable qualities, and even more for the sweetness of her temper, than the great beauty of her person: for, after all, what is beauty compared with temper, in a wife? doubtless beauty has its charms, flatters the husband's eye; as affection fills the heart, it gives a more stirling value to mental adornments; but what is beauty by itself? A rare gem in public, and a great plague at home. The perfections of the heart and mind,

meekness and modesty, are the real and only invaluable attributes capable of perfecting matrimonial happiness; and when beauty is found as the diamond polish of these important qualities, then indeed may the man possessing such a wife pride himself upon more than common happiness, and upon being more than commonly favoured by nature; a heartless wretch if he does not render himself worthy of the blessing. A good wife is indeed a blessing, such a gift of heaven as none but the possessor can comprehend; beauty fades away like the withering rose, but conjugal love remains like the oaken root, capable of roughing the storms of life, and receiving the finest finish.

Robert chose and secured a wife who *deserved* to be called a blessing. Mary de Moselle bid fair to be the same to the Duke de Briançon.

At this early stage of their courtship, neither of the lovers knew that their flirtations were noticed; had Susan been in better spirits she would have undeceived them, for she loved

mischief, and would have amused herself exceedingly by the opportunity thus offered of retaliating upon her brother, for the many blushes he brought upon her cheeks from the moment of his discovering her love for Robert. But her heart was heavy, and she could think of none but her absent husband and his unhappy sister.

CHAPTER VII.

DURING all this time Albert de la Lance continued in solitude at his new habitation, spending his days in useful study, and in ornamenting the grounds about the house. In all his occupations Isabel was present to his imagination, every thing he did seemed to be done for her; his favorite pursuits were those to which he knew she was most partial. Her long absence preyed considerably upon his spirits, and his health began to suffer seriously from the anxieties of his mind.

The same attentions which were shown him from the first moment by his worthy landlord, continued to be paid him, without however bringing a visit from the person to whom he was so much indebted; for Maurice Adellien lived continually within the castle, from which he gave his directions for the management of his vast estates. The two or three confiden-

tial persons to whom he intrusted the execution of his orders, had ever shown themselves worthy of the trust, by attending scrupulously to the welfare of his affairs, and by seeing that nothing was wanting to the improvement of the property. In the selection of them Maurice Adellien had been very fortunate, or had displayed the soundness of his judgement, for they did not enrich themselves by plundering their employer, but were satisfied with the handsome allowance which they received as the price of their labour and the reward of their honesty.

At first Albert thought it next to impossible to add to the conveniencies which his house possessed; he was however mistaken; Maurice Adellien sent in various articles of furniture, and a bookcase completely filled with new publications. Such marks of kindness were as unexpected, as they were welcome to the tenant. It was by similar attentions, suited to the station of every person on the domain, that Maurice Adellien made himself so universally beloved.

The comforts Albert enjoyed under his new landlord, were not long being mentioned at the castle of Barsas, and brought down upon the worthy Maurice Adellien the indignation of his insolent neighbour, who attributed his good treatment to a spirit of retaliation and the hope of keeping alive the hatred which had existed in uninterrupted continuance for the last three generations.

When Adellien became possessed of the castle and its vast appurtenances, at least, after his claim had been referred to the King and declared in his favour, he was given to understand that if he would make some kind of acknowledgment tending to criminate the conduct of his late Lord, he might be received into the society of the family of Barsas. The proposition was by no means well received; he returned for answer, that he begged to decline the honour of the Count's acquaintance upon any terms. It was a formidable blow to the dignity of the haughty noble, who fancied that because Maurice Adellien was inferior in ancestry to himself he would be glad

to accept his acquaintance at any price. In truth the late Count de Barsas knew not the extent of his neighbour's worth, and it brought upon him a lesson which he never forgave to the day of his death, and which Adrien flattered himself he could revenge. Nothing was left undone which was likely to annoy the peaceful possession of the Castle of Montfort, who was determined to punish his neighbour by showing his contempt of him, and accordingly took no notice of any thing he did. Since Albert's residence at his new house several attacks were made with a view to destroy the plants cultivated in the extensive gardens; the offenders were fortunately detected, and after a while he was suffered to remain without any further molestation.

These depredations, trifling as they were, were sufficient to prove the antipathy which existed against him at the castle of Barsas. Twice he was formally warned by some anonymous friend that danger awaited him if he ventured from his house towards stated di-

rections in which he commonly took his walks or rides; he prudently kept out of the way, and avoided the fatal consequence which would probably have followed his venturing out.

Both the warnings were sent at the time when the Marquis de Morbiere paid his last visit at the Castle of Barsas; it appeared by the circumstance that he was the engine which worked these deeds of infamy, and after the two attempts he had made to destroy de la Lance, (the last of which caused the Count de Barsas a premature death,) there could be little doubt of his being too much bent upon his death to remain long without repeating the attack.

To the almost nightly appearance of the spectre of the murdered Montfort, which had filled the ruffian's heart with terror, and awed the lawless bravoes in his pay, he owed his safety within the walls of his dwelling; for the spot on which the spirit was most commonly seen was not far distant from his house, and they feared lest blood might call

for blood, and deal summary justice for their iniquity. The murderers were frightened by the spectres of their victims and dared not meet the shadow of those who they feared not in the vigour of their lives.

The little chapel on the island was frequented during the whole of the summer, and prayers were constantly offered there for the repose of the soul of Philip de Montfort. Numberless offerings were made there, the whole of which of course fell to the lot of the priest who had the good fortune to be appointed to the office. The doves which were deposited there were removed to his house, to be taken care of during the winter months; but whether from confinement, or from negligence, they both died, and a most unfavourable omen was drawn from their loss. Some good folks said the event related to the death of the Count de Barsas; whilst others resisted the assertion as absurd. Many pretended it augured what befell Isabel and Margaret: this interpretation had many believers, and as many the reverse, for it was again contended, that mistress and

maid, however attached to each other, could not be represented by two doves, which were the symbol of conjugal felicity. But the most received of all beliefs was, that the doves died in consequence of the separation of Albert and Isabel, whose attachment was the theme of public conversation, and who were looked upon by all ranks of vassals of both castles as unfortunate and unjustly persecuted lovers. This was the age of chivalry, and Albert's bravery gained him so many friends, that multitudes were awake to his interests, and awarded him the fair prize which they conceived him to have purchased by irreproachable conduct and manly heroism. None of the higher vassals could see any reason why he should not have her; his achievements at the tournament had raised him higher in their estimation than the proudest of the province; he appeared to live in unostentatious comfort; he was in no one's debt, was charitable and good, brave and generous, handsome and affable; what more could be wanted for the daughter of the haughty noble? These quali-

fications they considered superior to any, nay above all others; the chivalrous spirit of the age raised them above the sordid feelings of after days; real manly worth was then thought equal to rank and fortune; it was even more courted, and far more popular. Albert de la Lance was in this respect considered the first man in the province, and his conquest of the Marquis de Morbiere had raised him in their estimation, as it had lowered the fallen noble.

Albert was so popular that he might (had he been desirous of taking hostile measures against the family of Barsas) have become their most formidable and deadly enemy; but he had too good a heart to be at enmity with any one. His expenditures being very small, he employed the surplus of his income in diffusing comfort among the poor, and in the performance of innumerable acts of charity. His assistance was no where needed on the domain of Montfort, as the generosity of Maurice Adellien provided for its poor; it was on the estates of his bitterest enemy that he exercised his benevolence, and if in the gaudy halls of the

castle of Barsas he was hated and reviled, in the cottage of the humble he was loved and respected. Reluctant as were the ears of Adrien, they were continually assailed with the praises of his expelled tenant, and the more he contradicted the good he heard of him, the more he urged them to vindicate him.

The aged Dominick still continued to seek the wonted consolation in frequent visits to the Brown Knight, as the only one who could enter into the feelings of his-heart, and into whose bosom he could pour the sorrows of his own. The poor old man had long since heard of the return of his daughter, which almost drove him mad with joy; for he had a very different opinion of her than the Countess had of Isabel. He no longer grieved for her safety, as he knew her to be in excellent hands, and with her adored mistress; but he lamented her long absence, and feared that the relentless hand of death would cut him off without seeing her again. The idea so preyed upon his mind, that it was likely to verify the event; his spirits were too low to

enable him to exert himself; old age frustrated the endeavours which would have been successful in younger days; sickness, moreover, did much towards decay: in short, Dominick knew that in the common course of nature he must be near the goal of his career, which had indeed been long, but full of woe, and of all his sorrows his greatest were for Isabel, whom he had served from the cradle. His spirits were even more broken than his frame, and the prophecies of his friend the wood-cutter did not brighten his future prospects enough to give him any cause for hope. One day he asked him what he thought would be his end; "Ah! master Dominick," said the rustic, with a deep-drawn sigh, "your end will be the sad end of us all, alive to-day and dead to-morrow; but you'll have more sorrow yet; the few hairs you have upon your hoary head will still be thinned with grief; your eyes are not so closed but they'll shed many a big tear; your heart is not so hardened but that it will heave many a sigh: no, master Dominick, would to the Virgin that I could tell you better things.—

Why do you ask me? why do you seek me to know my thoughts? Have I not told you that this is an evil year; that the winds bear no good, that mischief is about, and that no good is near? Hark, master Dominick, one more warning, and ask me no more questions: as long as you hear that the ghost of the murdered man roams like the angry lion among the devouring wolves; as long as you hear that the spectre walks here above; so long, I tell you, you will have cause for woe. The spectre hurts not; no (the Virgin save us); but, like the harmless feather which you tie up to fright away the birds, the spirit comes to keep off murder and deeds of blackness; for, mark me, friend Dominick, there's murder yet about."

"Alas!" said the old domestic, "who is to be the victim now?"

"Peace, Dominick," quoth the wood-cutter; "be not too eager about things to come; pry not more into futurity than you are able to bear; be content with ignorance, but look not for happier times yet. I tell you, master Dominick, there's mischief yet about."

Far from reaping consolation from his questions, Dominick always left the wood-cutter more wretched than he was before.

The rustic prophet having of late foretold events which had come to pass, got more fame than he had attained during the last twenty years of his life; he never foretold good, and the world being full of evil, he could scarce fail being sometimes in the right. The mysterious manner in which he delivered his opinions, carefully avoiding foretelling any particular event, but speaking of occurrences in general, got him more credit than he deserved; as the credulous coupled the most trifling incidents with his broad-cast prophecies, he never failed to remind them, whether he had done it or not, that he had long since foretold what happened. Nevertheless he was looked upon with considerable veneration; and as he escaped the imputation of dealing with the devil, he acquired a reputation of extraordinary wisdom.

The wood-cutter never pretended to be an astrologer, and as cards were not yet invented, he kept clear of the charge of practising the

sombre arts, and of coming unlawfully by his knowledge; his taking no fees was again in his favour, and raised him above the cut of common fortune-tellers who invent any lie for the sake of making money, being too indolent to earn a livelihood in any other way. His manner of taking the omens was peculiar to himself, and was regulated by the most important occurrences of the day.

The wood-cutter had this failing, but was in other respects an excellent man; he was a good husband and father, injured no one, supported his family by the honest labour of his hands, was humble to his superiors, and kind to his equals. It cannot be supposed that all his neighbours gave ear to his predictions; some were content with discrediting, whilst others laughed outright and quizzed him more unceremoniously than exactly suited him. From the latter he scrupulously kept his inferences, and avoided their society as much as possible, fearing that their mirth might lessen his fame, and that he might finish by being completely disregarded. It appears that he de-

livered his prophecies conscientiously, they were not a string of words huddled together to make an impression by their noise, but his own personal feelings, and the conclusions which he drew from passing events. Naturally fond of noticing and communicating but part of what he heard, trifling conversations often acquired a questionable shape, which was never intended to have been given.

For many years Dominick looked upon the wood-cutter as a kind of unreasonable enthusiast, and used to be much amused by his prophecies: but of late his opinion of him had altered, and he began to consider what he said as the natural consequence of the times. Far from deriving any consolation, he could only become the more wretched, for as the wood-cutter never by any chance gave a favourable opinion, unless it were to village maids and swains who wished to know the life they were likely to lead in the bonds of hymen, nothing but misery could follow the believing of him. Once, on a most inglorious occasion, the wood-cutter got unmercifully ducked, for

having given an unfavourable opinion of a young damsel, but the persons who were guilty of the outrageous act had, for some petty offences for which they feared their lord's chastisement, been induced to migrate from the domain, and seek adventures in other parts; this gave the field to the prophet, who was considered as an injured man, and from that time, which was full thirty years before the sorrows of Isabel, he was never again molested.

Although the wood-cutter declared to Dominick that the ghost of the murdered Philip de Montfort was perfectly harmless and inoffensive, he was more frightened by it than any man on the two domains; his timidity is not to be wondered at, for even in these enlightened times when religion ought to have so much more influence on the human heart, such an apparition would create unutterable terror, and cause the whole neighbourhood to be deserted. How many houses are there not at this very time in England, which are shut up and forsaken for being reputed

haunted? The mere mention of a ghost is enough to alarm a whole district, and the midnight fictions of a Christmas fireside are often too much for the comfort of the hearers, who retire to bed in fearful tremour, expecting to see the dread objects of which the stories vibrate within their ears.

Many laid wait to see the spectre of Montfort, but they did it out of bravado, and not from courage. Its visitations at the castle of Barsas were not long being known throughout the two domains, and gave a more formidable opinion of it than had ever been entertained; its haunts were supposed to be local, and not to extend beyond certain parts of the immediate neighbourhood of the castle of Montfort; but when it was found that it roamed further, and had threatened the Marquis de Morbiere with extermination, they saw no reason why it should not appear in cottages as well as castles. The thought greatly increased the existing fears, and terror ran infinitely higher than it had ever done since the first moment of its ap-

pearance on the plot of ground, formerly cultivated by the Countess de Montfort.

The family of Barsas were in constant alarm, lest the restless spirit should again appear within their walls. The Countess dreaded being left alone, and since the eventful night, when Isabel was carried away, the image of the spectre never ceased to be present to her imagination, although she did all she could to divest herself of her fears. The priest had been desired to say masses for the repose of its soul; he did so, but his terrors were at least equal to his patroness's; the same feeling existed throughout the castle; the least wind, the cracking of a plank, the jarring or shutting of a door, would rouse their apprehensions.

As winter crept on, with shortening days, the fears which summer nights rendered supportable, became more insufferable; the saloons, halls, and offices presented the same cheerless aspect.

During the Marquis de Morbiere's stay at the castle of Barsas, the spectre was seen roaming amidst the purlieus of the walls, and

the warder of the gates declared, that one night as he sat the midnight watch he saw the ghost within the first court, and that it soon after vanished as a fiery fluid through the crevices of the massive gate. True or untrue, his story was received with avidity and canvassed throughout the castle. As Dominick could not help meeting the servants at meal times, the day after the warder's alarm, he heard it, and it again roused his fears for the safety of his mistress and his beloved child; he thought the time was come for the accomplishment of the wood-cutter's prophecy, and would have journied to the castle of Briançon, if he had not been prevented by Albert de la Lance, who advised his not doing any thing which might influence the Countess against him; assuring him at the same time that as he had never been guilty of crime, and more especially of murder, he need have no apprehension of the ghost, as in his opinion spirits were only allowed on earth to frighten the wicked into repentance, and induce them to return to better ways. Dominick listened to the consoling words, but

much as he believed Albert de la Lance, he could not divest himself of fears too deeply rooted in his heart to be eradicated.

Few persons would have listened so patiently to Dominick's complaints as Albert de la Lance; on every occasion he gave him his advice, cheered his drooping spirits, encouraged him to struggle against the deep melanchly with which he was overcome, and represented in the kindest terms the injury he did himself in not resisting the pernicious effects of grief. To all this Dominick promised compliance, and returned home with a determination to perform his engagement, but sorrow was stronger than himself, and when again at the castle, he would go to his room and give way to a flood of tears; for his heart was full, and his aged eyes as in times of infancy could not retain the gusting stream. The Countess beheld his sorrow with perfect unconcern, and Adrien burst into a violent laugh every time he saw the old man in tears; the same the priest, he made light of grief, as his heart was too hardened by habitual hypocrisy to feel for the

woes of others, or to have any real ones of his own. Not so the Doctor, he was formed of kinder materials, he pitied him with all his heart, and comforted him to his best; but his dread of the Count, of the Countess, and of the Abbé, prevented his seeing much of Dominick; he therefore often lost the benefit of his humane disposition, and was reduced to seek the solitude in which he could, unseen and unheard, vent the fulness of his heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

When Robert could no longer see the beloved object on the embattled tower, and that the waving of her handkerchief was lost in the thick mist which overhung the castle, he joined his noble companions, and they pressed on towards the castle of Morbiere, which was at least six hours hard riding from the castle of Briançon. They had proceeded about three leagues when they were met by a messenger riding full speed, who recognising Robert pulled up, and addressed him thus; "I was hastening to the Duchess's castle, with tidings of great sorrow."

"Sorrow!" exclaimed Robert; "what has happened at our castle?"

"Here is a packet, Sir." The man pulled out a packet from his vest, and handed it to Robert, who instantly broke the seal: it contained a letter from the Doctor announc-

ing the melancholy death of the Countess de Barsas, who had been the night before seized with an apoplectic fit, whilst in bed, and found a corpse early next morning.

"Read this," said Robert, to the Baron de Rochefort, endeavouring at the same time to conceal the strong emotions with which he was agitated. "What is to be done now?"

"Lamentable news," said the veteran, handing the letter to the Baron de Ferneuf. "You must go back to the castle, my young friend, leave us to our errand, and go and consult your wife; you must settle some plan in this wretched affair."

"Think that my sister should be carried off, and my mother expire in the same night; it is too much."

"Rochefort's advice is the best you can follow," said the Baron de Ferneuf; "let me entreat you to return to your bride, at such a moment it is absolutely necessary."

"And what is to become of Isabel?" exclaimed the affectionate brother.

"We will seek her," replied the veteran; "I think, Robert, you can trust our experience and discretion; go back this instant, it is your duty."

"And am I to leave you to face danger alone?"

"Yes, Robert," quoth the veteran; "and we insist upon your return to your wife; we are both bachelors, we shall not at any rate be a loss to the fair sex."

"You are too generous." Robert would have said more, but he was not able.

It was long before the Barons could persuade him to return to the castle of Briançon; at length they prevailed and he took leave of them, turning his horse homewards and followed by the messenger.

The friendly Barons pursued their route at a rapid pace, taking the whole of the men with them, as it was not deemed necessary that any should return with Robert. So accustomed were the horses to the mass of metal which they bore, that they travelled on as if they carried but feather weight. Besides his armour,

the Baron de Rochefort was a heavy man; but he was exceedingly active, and too good a horseman to distress his steed.

After travelling about three hours the day began to close in upon them, and the veteran reminded his friend that they were within a short distance of the castle of the Baron de Rolincour, who had been invited to the wedding of Susan de Briançon, but unable to attend on account of indisposition.

"He is hospitable, and will receive us well, we can do nothing to-night, we shall hardly reach our destination before midnight, and then perhaps do more harm than good; I am of opinion that we had better take up our quarters for to-night, and set out again by day-break to-morrow morning; we shall then take the Marquis unawares."

"I have no objection," said the Baron de Ferneuf; "I fear we can do nothing to-night."

With this understanding they made for the castle of Rolincour. When they arrived at the gates the strength of the party alarmed the warder, and he summoned it to declare its er-

rand; the veteran soon made himself known, and the gates were instantly thrown open, and re-closed when he had marshalled the men through them.

The veteran sent in a message to the noble owner of the castle, who immediately desired that the Barons, their men, and horses, should be made quite welcome; requesting, at the same time, that the former would accompany his gentleman into the splendid banqueting-room, in which he was sitting surrounded by his numerous family, and several friends who were visiting him.

"Thrice welcome, good Barons," cried the hospitable host; "I like to be taken in this way; I am truly happy to see you, how do you do?"

"Very well, thank God," said the veteran; "and how do you do?"

"Middling, only middling," replied the Baron de Rolincour; "how did your wedding get on? my wife is very anxious to hear all about it."

"Very,—" said the Baroness; "I regret we could not be present."

"You lost nothing by your absence," quoth the veteran; "you have of course heard of the horrid crime which was committed last night?"

"No, I have not. What is it?"

"Isabel de Barsas was carried off by a band of ruffians."

"What, again?"

"Yes, again." The veteran related what had taken place on the day of the wedding, and made known the subject of his warlike journey.

"I will assist you with all my might and men," said the gallant Baron de Rolincour. "I am too unwell to bear my armour, but my eldest son shall be my representative, and supply the place of Robert de Barsas:—Are you agreeable?"

"Most certainly," said the Baron de Ferneuf; "he will not mind hard blows, should there be any dealt, which is not at all improbable."

"He has been to Palestine," quoth de Rolincour.

"Enough," exclaimed the veteran, whose blood boiled at the mention of the crusades, in which he had gathered so many well-earned laurels: "Let him come with us, the safety of the fairest girl in France is no mean exploit:—What think you, young gentleman?"

"A glorious one," replied the young man, who inherited from his father all the chivalrous ardour of the age: "When do we start?"

"Young and eager, ready in an instant; go, buckle on your armour for fear you should not be ready; we start before daylight."

"You joke me," said the young man; "but you will find me ready and willing: tell me, father, do you not think the brave veteran holds my valour cheap?"

"No, Henry," cried Rochefort; "I know you to be brave; but we old soldiers love to sport with the young ones; you will fight like a lion, I have no doubt: be ready then before daylight, we shall have a cold day and warm work to stand."

"So much the better," said the Baron de Rolincour; "it will show him hardy in heart and body."

The Baron's hospitality soon made him discover that his friends had not dined; an excellent repast was speedily served up, and was truly welcome to them, as they had not tasted any thing since an early hour in the morning. During dinner they canvassed over with their noble host the best method of getting redress from the Marquis de Morbière.

"I am of opinion," said he, "that you must take him by surprise, or he will be too deep for you; he is an artful wretch. Of all things have a care not to trust yourself in his power, for you will never get out of it alive."

"Nonsense, my good Baron," said the veteran, "you don't suppose he will cage us, do you?"

"I do, indeed; and moreover know him to be capable of it. I have heard such instances of his baseness, that nothing he can do will ever surprise me; my only astonishment is how the family of Barsas could ever think of allowing

his addresses to the fair Isabel; surely such a match was not proper for her."

"He has rank and fortune," said Ferneuf; "they are a mercenary family."

"Do you think she ever liked this Morbiere?"

"Certainly not."

"Did she ever encourage his addresses?"

"Never: I can bear witness to the contrary."

"I have heard of some attachment to a stranger in the neighbourhood; who is he, can you tell me? people speak highly of him."

"And well they may," exclaimed the veteran, who had hitherto been too much occupied with his plate to interfere in the conversation; "he's the trustiest sword in France; my honour for that, he is indeed a gallant fellow."

"Brave?"

"Aye, brave as his battle-axe, and that can deal round blows, upon my faith."

"Had he not some encounter with the Marquis de Morbiere."

"A glorious one, a very glorious one; he trod him under foot like a hero: by the saints, my blood boiled for him; he made a bad finish though."

"How so; was he vanquished at last?"

"Vanquished! it would take a good dozen to vanquish him, he fights like a very devil."

"What then do you blame him for?"

"For not crushing him to death, as he ought to have done; he could have done it if he would: if a man ever had a good chance of another's life in an honourable way, he had it then."

"What kind of man is he?" said the Baroness, who had listened the whole time with great interest.

"Both an Adonis and a Hercules, Madam," replied the veteran; "the most comely man I ever saw. Upon my word, Miss Isabel showed no bad taste; and I think the Countess's death may give him a chance of her; what think you, Ferneuf?"

"I have my fears, that brother of her's is

an evil genius, and his ready priest a worse one; it would be more easy to manage the kingdom than those two."

"I was in hopes the old lady's death would have been of benefit to her; the fact is she must marry some one who can protect her, for the Marquis de Morbiere will never leave her a year's rest till then; her brother's conduct is an eternal shame upon him."

"Which of the brothers?" said the Baroness.

"Adrien, Madam," replied the veteran, "he is altogether as unworthy a man as any I know; Robert is quite the reverse, he is in every respect a most excellent young man; I love him as though he was my own child."

"I have heard a great deal of good of him," said the Baron de Rolincour; "and believe him to deserve it."

"He does indeed, you may take an old soldier's word for it."

The Baron de Rolincour was an old soldier himself, and the reference was the best that could possibly be given. When the veteran

disliked a man he said little of him, but when he liked him, he was indefatigable in his praise and would plead his cause through thick or thin.

The veteran did not fail to entertain the family with a minute account of the tournament, displaying the prowess of Albert de la Lance in such colours as were sure to command the admiration of his host, who delighted in anecdotes of military valour.

In this way the evening passed on to the satisfaction of all parties. Henry de Rolincour quite burned to prove himself worthy the distinction shown him, and retired to rest with great reluctance, fearing that he might be drowsy in the morning and not ready to attend the noble warriors upon their expedition. Having returned their acknowledgments for the hospitality with which they were treated, the Barons de Ferneuf and Rochefort took a friendly leave of them, and retired to their respective chambers.

We will return to Robert, who we left on his way to the castle of Briançon, accompanied

by the messenger who brought the melancholy tidings of the Countess de Barsas's sudden death. He rode on with redoubled speed, putting from time to time questions to his attendant relative to the manner in which his mother was found, and to the effect which her death had produced upon the different members of the family. The information he collected nearly ran thus: in the course of the day Adrien de Barsas went out riding, and returned about his usual time; he joined the Countess at dinner together with the priest and a friend or two who had called in the course of the day. They observed, that she appeared unwell, her face seemed flushed, and she was more irritable than usual. After dinner she retired to her own room, which was her constant custom when she could get away from her guests, and instead of joining the party in the saloon, she sent her apologies, not feeling well enough to come down. Rather sooner than her general hour, she summoned her maid and went to bed, she complained of being very sleepy, and expressed a wish to be

left alone; her desire was of course complied with, and when her attendant went to her room in the morning, she found her a lifeless corpse. The terrified woman instantly rushed out of the room screaming for help; her voice luckily reached the doctor's ears, who came to know what had happend; in a few unconnected words he heard of the dreadful event, and went to the Countess to see whether she could be resuscitated, or whether the woman had only imagined the evil; but no sooner did he behold the lifeless remains than he pronounced the awful truth, and declared that no assistance could be rendered, as she had died of apoplexy; he desired one of the many attendants, who in a few moments collected in the room, to inform Adrien of the calamity. He soon came, but he was by no means so much affected as the doctor would have supposed; he beheld his deceased mother with feelings bordering on inhumanity; calmly asking whether the priest had been sent for; scarce had he spoken the words when the smooth tongued hypocrite made his appearance. His looks clearly proved

that he already knew of the event; he seemed quite borne down with grief, but no sooner had he studied the expression of his Lord's countenance than he modelled his own after it, and the sorrow which at first appeared so deeply portrayed, wore away by degrees to the placidness of resignation.

Poor old Dominick had shed so many tears, on former occasions, that his eyes refused to pour forth the feelings of his heart, which was sincerely grieved for the Countess, notwithstanding her treatment of him. Many of the household were deeply affected, and many were scarcely moved beyond the surprise which they experienced on hearing of her decease.

The messenger ceased speaking as they galloped up to the drawbridge: he summoned the guard, who immediately demanded the watchword; Robert gave it and they were admitted. In an instant his name resounded throughout the castle, and Susan ran into the court to meet her beloved husband. As Robert pressed her to his arms he felt that she trembled excessively, and was almost unable

to bear herself upon her legs; to his affectionate inquiries into the cause of her illness, she told him that all the family, the guests, and herself in particular, had been frightened by his sudden return, fancying some misfortune had befallen him. He told her in a few words of his mother's awful death, and desired her to request the Duchess to join him in an apartment where he could in private tell her the distressing news, his feelings being too much harrowed up to bear the condolences of the multitude of guests at the castle. Susan, on the assurance that nothing had happened to himself, soon revived, and carried his message to her mother, who immediately came to him. She was much affected with what she heard, and promised to apologise to her friends for his not appearing among them. Robert and his lovely bride then retired to the suite of apartments which had been prepared for them.

When the Duchess went to her guests with the reason of Robert's unexpected return, they were much concerned for the death of the Countess de Barsas, who was personally

known to all of them; but the circumstance was interpreted as favourable to the future happiness of her daughter, consequently lessening the grief which would otherwise have been felt, and creating hopes of which they had hitherto despaired, the Countess's character being too well known to leave any prospect of an adjustment, or of her consent to Isabel's union to Albert de la Lance.

But, if it were possible for a greater difficulty to exist than the union of the lovers, it was in her recapture, of which many were sanguine, and of which as many despaired. The Marquis de Morbiere was hardened to the very soul, incapable of a single feeling of honour, callous to pity; a monster, whose greatest joy was the destruction of virtue and the triumph of vice. Should he give an unfavourable answer (which was the only one expected of him), what was to be done? This was an alarming question indeed; every one put it to himself, and hardly dared breathe it to his neighbour, for it carried with it a train of difficulties, of which the end remained uncertain,

and of which the consequence, however dreadful to think of, might be to hasten the death of the unhappy victim by the hand of a merciless assassin. Others had shared a similar fate, and had perished in long continued agonies in the dungeons of his castle. Baba could best witness that the corpse of one heroic victim still laid unconsumed within its walls; had they been aware of these sickening circumstances, it would have been next to madness to send a demand of Isabel, without a sufficient armed force to support it. The men by whom the brave Barons were accompanied gave a colouring to their remonstrances, showing a determination at the same time to proceed to further steps should their warning be unattended to; but a handful of men could do nothing against the strong castle of Morbiere, or the host with which he could line his battlements in case of their resorting to extremities.

The Count de Moselle's knowledge of the world made him hold the hope of success much lighter than many persons assembled at the

castle of Briançon, who would not allow a possibility of the Marquis de Morbiere's destroying his unfortunate victim rather than give her up. The very demand of Isabel would necessarily throw a stigma upon his character, which he would find himself obliged to endeavour to remove, either by a firm protestation of his innocence or by the number of his men; and it was highly probable that he would resort to the latter as the hardiest and most summary expedient. Upon the strength of his castle he could place great dependance, for he had lately discovered the accessible part by which the jester had returned by the means of the defective buttresses on the night of his saving Margaret; and repaired and fortified it in a manner to insure its resisting a long siege.

Such an improvement was no small disappointment to Baba, who fancied the weakness of the place had altogether escaped his master's observation; he began therefore to make diligent search for means of escape in case of necessity, but he found none.

The Duke de Briançon spent great part of

the evening with his sister and her husband, to talk over the plans to be resorted to for the recovery of Isabel in case of their friends returning without her: the Duchess joined them as often as she was able to get away from her guests, but they could decide on nothing, as all were of opinion that entreaties and threats were equally vain and useless. The Duke proposed going to join the gallant Barons with a large re-inforcement, thinking it probable that the appearance of an armed force might awe de Morbiere into compliance. Robert did not think so; on the contrary, he thought he would shut the gates of his castle against them, and refuse to hear what the Barons had to say, in which case they could not possibly succeed. Robert's argument appeared reasonable enough, but in giving his opinion, or in dissuading him from going to join his friends, he did not mean to prevent his preparing a force to be used, should it be required for this step; he warmly advised, and thankfully accepted the Duke's proposal of giving out the necessary orders on the following day, for calling

upon his vassals to aid him in the defence of injured innocence.

The new tie by which the Duke was attached to Isabel could scarce add to his affection for her; he once suspected himself of a lurking sentiment which would have grown into love, had not the timely discovery of her having pledged her faith to another induced him as a prudent man to wean himself of what it would have been folly to indulge. He nevertheless admired her as he had always done, and delighted in her society; but having once conquered the kindling flame, he considered her as a sister, and although she was ignorant of her empire, she had the same claim as Susan upon his fraternal affection. He was consequently rendered very unhappy by her sufferings, and was determined to leave nothing undone for her recovery.

CHAPTER IX.

Full two hours before day-break the loud clatter of horses re-echoing through the vast extent of the castle of Rolincour, proclaimed the departure of the noble friends on their way to the castle of the Marquis de Morbiere. The veteran did not fail to compliment the young champion on his readiness in the service of the fair, and for being so punctual to the time appointed for mounting.

It was a dry frosty morning, and a few lingering stars were reflected upon the polished steel of the warriors' armour, without affording sufficient light to reconnoitre the forces. At length the sky began to look red, and the bright rays of the rising sun illuminated the dusky horizon.

"We muster strong," said the veteran to Henry de Rolincour; then turning to the Baron de Perneuf, he added, "how many have we?"

"Fifty," cried the former; "I told them all ere I mounted."

"Well done, boy!" exclaimed the veteran; "that is something like a soldier; you will do wonders."

"I will do my best," replied the young warrior.

"Well said," quoth the veteran.

The Count de Rolincour's ancestors had never been wanting in bravery; he inherited his full share of it, and handed it down to his sons, who were as brave as men could be. Henry was young, but he had seen service, and acquired as much experience as knowledge of the art of war. He distinguished himself among the thousands of heroes who fought in Palestine, and gained a reputation of which his family were not a little proud. Such a young man was sure to please the Baron de Rochefort, who was quite enthusiastic of military valour.

The Baron de Ferneuf was no less brave than the veteran; like him he had shared the perils and honours of the field; but his temper was of a different turn, he was fonder of joking

and of cheerful society. His friend, on the contrary, loved the company of old warriors, with whom he could fight over his past campaigns, and tell and hear all the mighty prowesses which had been done. He was nevertheless fond of female society, and, in this respect, Ferneuf and he completely agreed.

About the middle of the day the cavalcade came in sight of the castle of Morbiere; the veteran commanded them to halt, and having formed them into line, he harangued the men on the subject of the undertaking of which the crisis was at hand. They listened to him with great earnestness, and with the respectful silence of well-disciplined soldiers. After this preamble he requested the Baron de Ferneuf, and Henry de Rolincour, to withdraw with him for a few minutes, to determine the line of conduct which it would be most prudent to adopt; previously taking the precaution to remove the men behind a thick clump of trees, which effectually prevented their being seen from the castle.

"Ferneuf," said the veteran, "you are a man

of experience; I entertain a great opinion of your judgment, and request you to tell me plainly what line of conduct you wish us to pursue. From you, Henry de Rolincour, I request the same favour; not that I can flatter you by saying that you have as much experience as our friend; it is not to be expected. Nevertheless, you must give your opinion freely, and a line of conduct must be marked out, that we may not blunder, and that we may act consistently with each other."

"I would rather leave the management to you," said Ferneuf; "your own good sense will insure as much success as our opinions can promote."

"You are going from the subject," quoth the veteran; "I must beg your compliance with my request; I wish you both to tell me how you would act, were you left to act by yourselves."

"Since you insist upon it," said Ferneuf, "I will give my advice. In the first place, I would halt at the castle-gate, and demand an

interview with the Marquis de Morbiere; but I would not enter unless the fifty men were to enter likewise to protect us from his treachery, as I have no doubt of his taking any advantage in his power. I would insist upon his meeting us outside of his castle, and in case of refusal, I would send in the declaration which we have signed for that purpose."

"What is your opinion, my young friend?" said the veteran.

"If I am allowed to submit it," quoth Henry, "I must own I do not agree with the Baron. I think it would be better to depute one of us to the castle, to desire the Marquis de Morbiere to give up his captive; or it might be as well for two to go, and the third remain with the men to attack the castle, in case of their detention."

"You are right," said the veteran; "Baron, I think it had better be so; don't you?"

"Perhaps it may," said Ferneuf; "I own the idea did not enter my head; it is a very good one."

"So I think," said the veteran; "we must draw lots for the honour of being the champions."

"Not so," quoth young Rolincour; "you are better able to do justice to the task than I am; I must therefore request you to go together, and leave me the charge of the men."

"Quite right," said Rochefort; "it must be so; should we be longer than you think the conference will require, you will come to our assistance."

Henry de Rolincour requested a few more instructions, which were given him; after which the veteran returned to the troop, and charged them to obey the gallant knight in case of necessity. The two Barons then proceeded to the castle.

As soon as they were seen by the watch, the shrill sound which he blew from his horn brought the warder to the battlement to know what the strangers were that wished admittance.

"What is your pleasure, Sir Knights?" cried he.

"We wish to see the Marquis de Morbiere," replied the veteran.

"Be pleased to wait whilst I make known your request."

The warder disappeared, and in a few moments returned.

"My noble master begs your names and your pleasure."

"Our business is private," quoth the veteran.

"Your names then."

"The Baron de Rochefort and the Baron de Ferneuf."

The man again disappeared, and after a longer delay than the first, returned.

"You shall be admitted forthwith; so commands the Marquis."

The massive portcullis was gradually drawn up, filling the air with the screeching of the rusty chains by which it was suspended. When sufficiently raised, the Barons pulled back their beavers, and rode into the court, the portcullis being let down with a tremendous crash, the moment they had passed.

They were immediately ushered into a stately hall, but were left waiting a considerable time before the Marquis de Morbiere made his appearance, at last he entered, clad in full armour, and followed by one of his esquires, bearing his shield and battle-axe.

" I suppose your visit to be of unfriendly bearing," said he in a stern voice to the Barons; " your pleasure."

" I am sorry to say your conclusion is right," answered the veteran; " we come to demand the lady Isabel de Barsas."

The words were as a thunderbolt to the guilty man, but he recovered himself with his usual address, and answered, " I know nothing of her; you must seek her elsewhere."

" She is within the walls of this castle," cried the veteran.

" She is not."

" She is," quoth Ferneuf; " you had her carried off from the castle of Briançon."

" You lie by your throat," exclaimed the assassin; " I have never seen her since I last saw her at her father's castle."

"That is false," said the veteran; "we have her own testimony of the contrary."

"Who cares for testimony," cried Morbiere; "is the word of an eloping wench to be taken? I would not be troubled with her."

"I tell you in your face you have her in your castle; give her up this instant, or your life shall pay the forfeit."

"Recant your threats," said the ferocious ruffian; "or your own lives may pay the forfeit of your insolence before you leave this castle."

"I care for neither you or your castle," cried the veteran; "I can face both." He was interrupted by the entrance of Baba, who (from his master's not paying any attention to the circumstance) must have been previously ordered to attend.

"I repeat before my jester," said the Marquis, "that Isabel de Barsas is not in this castle, and that I know nothing of her; with this answer you may be satisfied, and leave my castle."

Baba seemed to sink beneath the weight of contending feelings; he immediately guessed

what they came for, and appeared struggling to speak.

"You may say what you will," quoth the Baron de Ferneuf; "but we have proofs of your having once carried her off; and likewise her maid; and of your having treated them both with brutal cruelty; of your having again carried off Isabel de Barsas, we accuse you, and demand her back."

"Baba," said the Marquis, addressing himself to the jester, "you must bear witness to the truth, and give the lie to these insolent nobles."

The jester considered for a moment; then raising up his head, as if to give more weight to his words, he said, "Had you not appealed to me, I would have spared your honour by remaining silent; but as I am to speak the truth, and that I am fearless of its consequences, I declare most solemnly, as I would if they were the last words I have to speak, that you had the lady Isabel de Barsas in the forsaken part of your castle; that you had her maid likewise, and that it was I that let Margaret out."

"Fiend of hell," exclaimed the enraged Marquis, drawing his sword to run it through the jester, "you shall die as a liar." He made a desperate thrust at him, but it was fortunately guarded off by the veteran who struck the sword away with his battle-axe.

"I speak truth," said Baba, "and I declare that the Lady Isabel is at this moment confined in the same room as the first time."

"You lie,, vile grub." As the Marquis said this, he again attempted to kill the jester, but was prevented by the dexterity of the veteran, who said with increasing sternness, "We had proof enough without this good man's testimony; all doubt is now at an end, and we must have your final answer; do you mean to give up the lady Isabel?"

"No!" exclaimed the wretch; "you have your answer, and may take yourselves off, unless you wish to visit my dungeons."

"Consider the consequences of your conduct," said the Baron de Ferneuf.

"That is my business, and not yours," replied the other; "leave my castle this moment."

"You shall be satisfied," said the veteran; "but I must first have your answer to this paper." He handed it to the Marquis, who opened it, read it, then pulling off his gauntlet, and throwing it with the paper at the veteran, said with a sneer, "take your answer."

"You shall see us again," cried the veteran. The Marquis made no reply, but left the hall with his 'squire, contenting himself with casting a look of contempt upon him as he turned away."

Thinking it most likely that orders might be given to detain them in the castle, the Barons hastened into the court yard where they mounted their horses, and cleared the portcullis, which was raised to let them out; Baba followed close behind, but he was not seen by them, until they were many paces from the castle.

"Here is the jester," said Ferneuf to his friend; then addressing himself to Baba, asked if he had any thing to say.

"I seek protection," said Baba, melting

into tears; "if I am left behind, I shall be murdered."

"Come with us then," said the veteran, "we will take care of you; but you will perish with cold."

"I shall keep myself warm with walking," said Baba.

"We cannot spare you time for walking; come with us, we will mount you."

The jester was deplorably off, having nothing upon his head, or any extra covering to keep him from the sharpness of the frost: he nevertheless followed the Barons until they reached the troop; he started back as he beheld them, but judging from their attitude that they were friendly, he followed the Barons among them.

"What news?" cried young Rolincour.

"Nothing good," answered Ferneuf.

"Why, who have you got there?"

"The Marquis's jester."

"How came you by his jester?"

"Because he is too honest a man for him."

" We were just going to attack the castle, when we heard you coming."

" We shall have to do it soon," said the veteran, " we shall lose no time, I warrant you." He then related word by word what had taken place with the Marquis.

" Let us attack the castle at once," exclaimed several of the men.

" That would be folly," said the veteran, who was a judge of such matters; " we must have fifty times as many men to have any hopes of success."

" We can do nothing till we strengthen," said Ferneuf; " his castle seems well defended. I saw a great number of men about."

" So did I," said the veteran; " the guard room appeared full."

" The whole castle is in a state of defence," said Baba; " it has lately been repaired."

Time being too precious to be lost in conference, Baba having tied a handkerchief about his head, was put up behind one of the horsemen, and the cavalcade rode back at a brisk

pace towards the little inn at which they had baited in the morning. When they arrived there, the veteran desired that Baba might be called; the message was immediately carried by the host, and the jester returned with him. "Sit you down, my honest fellow," said he; "you behaved like a man."

"I am glad you think so," said Baba; "I could not bear to tell a lie to the prejudice of the lady Isabel."

"You were right," said Ferneuf; "your conduct is highly praiseworthy. How do you know that she is in the castle?

"Last night I heard her scream out for mercy; she seemed in great distress."

"Are you sure it was her?"

"Quite sure, Sir; her voice is too familiar to me to mistake it."

"Don't you think you could have saved her, as you did her maid?"

"No, Sir, or it would have been done."

"In what part of the castle is she then? is she confined in one of the dungeons?"

"No, Sir; she is confined in an upper room

in the part of the castle which is supposed to be uninhabited."

"What! is that part inhabited?"

"It is indeed, Sir."

"By whom?"

"By two murderers."

"Who have they murdered?"

"I know of one victim who now lies wasting away in a dungeon."

"A man or a woman?"

"A young woman; who was starved to death for being too virtuous."

"I remember hearing of a story of the kind," said the Baron de Ferneuf; "is it true?"

"Quite true, Sir," replied the jester; "I have seen her with my own eyes."

"When?"

"When I succeeded in saving Margaret, the lady Isabel's maid."

"She has told us of your saving her," said the veteran; "but how came you to get her out of the castle?"

"I found all the doors open."

"Who opened them?"

"I know not."

"Do you know how Isabel escaped?"

"Yes, Sir; when I was last at the castle of Barsas I heard the wonderful story from Dominick."

"Here, take a cup of wine; it will warm you."

Baba took the wine, and the conversation was interrupted by an intimation that the men were ready to start.

It was found that one of them had a cloak which he had brought to throw over his armour in case of rain, and which was of no use to him, as the day was clear and frosty; he lent it to the jester, to whom it proved an invaluable acquisition, as he was almost perishing with cold.

During Baba's examination, Henry de Rolincour remained a silent listener to what was said: he quite sickened at the horrible tale of the unfortunate young woman, and longed to avenge the wrongs of which she had been the victim. His feelings were scarcely more harrowed up than those of the two Barons, for

the veteran vowed that he had never been so disgusted with the sight of plains covered with killed and wounded, as he had been by the description Baba gave them of the manner in which he found the female in the dungeon.

"Isabel may share her fate," said he; "he will stop at nothing; and now he will be doubly desperate."

"We must hasten on then," quoth Henry de Rolincour; "not a moment must be spared; if we linger, she will be lost."

These words seemed to excite the whole cavalcade; they pressed their horses forward, and began to draw near to the castle of Rolincour. But their horses had done a hard day's work and were scarcely able to get on, they were therefore obliged to relax.

Night had long overtaken them before they reached the end of their day's journey; at last they summoned the castle guard, and the sound of Henry's well-known voice, gained them instant admittance.

When they had dismounted, Henry desired one of the upper servants to see to Baba's

comfort; he then led his friends into the saloon, where they found the family anxiously waiting for their return.

"You have been unsuccessful I see," said the Baron de Rolincour.

"We have," replied the Baron de Ferneuf.

"I thought it would be so," said the Baroness; "whenever I feel unhappy as I have done to-day, it is sure to be the forerunner of evil."

"We are as unhappy as yourself," said Henry; "and you will be more so than you are, when you hear what we have heard." He was immediately requested to relate all he knew, but he asked the veteran to do it for him, as he could better tell what had taken place in the interview with the Marquis de Morbiere: he begged, however, to take off his armour first, and his companions being as tired as himself, were glad to follow his example. They were instantly assisted by several attendants who ridded them of their metal, and bore it away to their respective apartments.

CHAPTER X.

THAT a true idea may be formed of the sufferings which our heroine endured, it is necessary to carry back the reader to the night of the wedding at the castle of Briançon.

During the whole of the evening she had been employed in attending upon the Duchess's guests, and giving the necessary orders for their being supplied with whatever was wanting to their entertainment. Her great good nature rendered the task agreeable to her, whilst at the same time all classes were delighted with the urbanity of her manner; for it was impossible to discharge the duties which she had undertaken with more grace and kindness. The Duchess, Susan, and Mary de Moselle were employed in the same hospitable way. In one of the apartments Isabel remarked a number of persons who eyed her with an air of curiosity which somewhat

alarmed her; she fancied they wondered at her officiousness as there were but few females in the room. Had she been aware that so large a number of men were assembled together she would not have gone in at all. What she at first took for astonishment she soon attributed to rudeness, as they hustled her about with very little ceremony; she took it as a hint for her to depart, and made all the haste she could to get to the opposite door, being nearer to it than to the one through which she had entered; but she found the difficulty increase, and felt herself carried away by a strong current, against which it was impossible to resist; they bore her away in this manner to a third door, which communicated with a gallery leading to the outer court, when suddenly she was caught up, and carried off, in defiance of cries and entreaties. The man who bore her away she recognised to be the same from whom she had taken the dagger. Fearful that her cries might bring persons to her assistance, Carl halted, and grasped his victim tight round the arms whilst some of his ac-

complices forced a handkerchief into her mouth to prevent her complaints being heard. He rushed forward again to where the Marquis de Morbiere and a few men who held the horses of the rest, stood waiting for them. The Marquis was muffled up in a large cloak fastened close round his face so as to hide his features which would otherwise have been seen by the light reflected out of the castle: but Isabel knew his voice too well to mistake him, and shuddered with horror as it sounded upon her ears. One of the men threw a large cloak about her, which covered her head as well as her person, and she was immediately fastened upon a horse in front of Carl; the Marquis and the remainder of the men mounted, and rode off at full speed, taking a cross cut with which Carl had rendered himself familiar.

Isabel had now her hands at liberty, and pulled out the handkerchief from her mouth; she screamed aloud, but she was only answered by the hoarse laugh of the ruffians that sur rounded her.

When they had proceeded a little way the Marquis rode up by Carl's side, and said to her, in an undisguised voice, "You see, young lady, that your freaks are of no use."

She returned no answer.

"The girl's giving herself airs again," said Carl; "we must teach her better manners this time."

"Depend upon that, Carl," said his master; "I won't be fooled again, I can tell you."

"That's right," quoth the journeyman, "show her you're her master; curse the wench, she gives us more trouble than she's worth. Why don't you speak, young devilment? Where's your tongue, slut, aye?"

"She won't talk," said the Marquis; "I'll see whether she holds out when I get home."

Isabel still remained silent, but she was more busily employed than Carl thought; she felt gently about his belt for his dagger, remembering that she owed her former preservation to it. After much search she succeeded in taking it, and concealed it as carefully as she could among her clothes.

The motion of the horse prevented Carl's feeling the withdrawing of the weapon. His mind was directed another way; he was musing over the plan which he had laid down for the re-capture of Margaret, in which his employer had faithfully promised to aid him, as the reward of his present exploit, should he succeed in carrying away the unhappy person of whom he had made himself possessed.

As Isabel concealed her prize she trembled convulsively, lest, by its being missed, she should be searched, and the only defence she had in the world be taken from her. She wept bitterly, but her sobs reached not the ears of the impious monster; and if they had been noticed by him, they would only have called forth fresh expressions of cruelty.

As they travelled on at a brisk gallop, Isabel thought of many plans of escape; but after much self-debate, so many difficulties arose to prevent their success that they were despaired of as fast as they were imagined. By one desperate endeavour which she made she risked some dreadful accident, if not her life: she

tried to unloose herself from the straps by which she was bound, and succeeded in undeing two of them; had she been able to have unbuckled the third, it was her intention, by a desperate struggle, to throw herself off the horse, and take advantage of the darkness of the night to creep into the wood through which they were at that time proceeding. She calculated that if she could but fall to the ground the horses behind might clear her, and before Carl could pull up she might effect her purpose. For a long time she tried to unbuckle the third strap, but all hopes instantly vanished, for Carl discovered what she was doing, and giving her a violent blow on the hand, exclaimed, "Let the buckle alone, you confounded slut, I suppose you are trying to get away; if you do not let the buckle alone, I'll run you through the body and leave you to shift for yourself, an' curse you; do you think we're to be fooled in this kind of way?" Isabel made no answer; and the ruffian continued: "I say, master, here's this devilment trying to get away again; if she isn't

quiet I will tie her hands together or heave her down and ride over her for a finish; she gives us more trouble, an' curse her, than we ever had with one of her sort before. Why don't you speak, you stupid drowsy wench? why don't you speak, aye?"

"Never mind, Carl," said his master, "she will find her tongue when we get her to the castle, take my word for that, or by my faith she shall have nothing to eat, and be left to perish, as she deserves, in a dungeon."

"That's the best way," cried Carl, "better put her there at once; we will see how the devilment likes her lodging."

"She sha'n't be long going there unless she lowers her note," replied the Marquis. "Let her alone now, we will have enough to say to her by and by."

"Ah, you're a faint-hearted fool," quoth the hireling.

The Marquis pocketed the compliment, and pushed his horse on, causing the whole cavalcade to do the same.

They travelled the whole of the night with-

out halting, and only arrived at the castle of Morbiere at break of day: the men seemed exhausted, and the horses scarcely able to move. They rode round to the postern gate, by which Isabel had been the first time conducted, and dismounted. The Marquis unlocked the gate, and led his horse through; Carl followed with his prisoner, and the rest came after. At the sound of horses' feet the new gaoler (who was the man whose duty it used to be to attend to the wants of the persons in the deserted part of the castle, from the inhabited part,) came to meet his master, bearing a light to show them in. Carl having unstrapped his prisoner, took her up in his arms and carried her in, preceded by the Marquis. The remainder of the cavalcade sought their own quarters. Isabel knew resistance to be vain, she therefore said nothing; Carl carried her into the same room in which she had before been confined, and placed her upon the sofa; the Marquis immediately sat himself down by her side, and slipt his arm around her waist: this was more than she could bear; "Keep off,

vile man!" she exclaimed, starting from his grasp; "keep off, I say, and do not insult me!"

"You must be brought to your senses, my pretty," said he; "you have played your game long enough. In this castle shall you pass the remainder of your days."

He waited expecting an answer, but finding that she returned none, he said, "Carl, you may retire, tell Paul to bring up something to eat." Carl did as he was desired. No sooner was the Marquis left with Isabel than he began urging his suit as if he had done nothing to lower himself in her estimation. "You know how I love you," said he, with pretended tenderness; "you, and you alone are to blame for being carried off; why were you so hard-hearted? why did you not consent to enter into an honourable union with me? surely you can never choose a man who loves you half so well: and as for that Albert de la Lance, who is he? what is he? You are too sensible a woman to lose yourself by such an alliance: with a mere upstart, a man of nothing; an

adventurer, a man who could never raise you above the level to which you would humble yourself. Think of my rank, think of my fortune, and my connexions; think of my vast possessions: all this may become yours if you will consent to live with me upon your own terms. What think you, Isabel? will you save me the pain of forcing you to compliance, by promising to remain with me?"

"I have listened to you, Sir," she replied, "that I might know how far your villany is capable of reaching. You fancy because you have me in your power, by an artifice so base that it lowers you to the level of the common cut-throat, that I must submit to become the partner of your infamy. You are vain enough to suppose that I can forego an honourable affection for the dishonour of sharing your boasted wealth. You must indeed have an extraordinary portion of presumption! Do you suppose, Sir, that because I am young, I am unable to distinguish between virtue and vice? If you do, you are mistaken. A man who by the basest scheme dares carry off a female

from under her father's roof, must at any rate be a fit object for the contempt of the world; a man who aims at the destruction of virtue, must be a wretch, too vile to be endured; and a man who dares insult a helpless female with the proposition which you have just made, is too detestable to deserve the name of man! Send me back to my friends, Sir; you can offer no other reparation for the injury you have done me; rid me of your presence if you have one spark of humanity. You need not flatter yourself to alter my opinion of Albert de la Lance by your contemptuous mention of him; I respect him as much as I despise you."

"A very fine speech," cried the Marquis sneering in her face; "you are a most inimitable actress: I like to see a flirting jilt pretend to decorum.—Come, come, Isabel, throw off this ill-fitting mask, there never was a woman who would not take any lover she could get: you are made of the same materials as the rest; you have amused yourself long enough."

She was too indignant to reply, but he seemed determined to provoke an answer from

her. " Don't you think this is a nice comfortable room? we can be very happy here; but if you like more splendour you shall have it if you promise to love me."

" The more you say, the more you make me despise you," said Isabel; " if I am to die, murder me at once, or cause your emissaries to murder me as they did my unfortunate father; but I will live and die virtuous!"

" You are an impudent head-strong girl, and you must be taught better manners."

" Give me a lesson of justice then, and release me."

" I will teach you how to use power, by keeping you here, and doing my pleasure by you."

" Kill me at once, and put me out of my misery; I am less fearful of death than I am of yourself."

" I must make you my wife first, and if I can't do that perhaps I may grant your request."

" I am innocent, therefore death has no horrors for me."

"You talk like a child, and must be treated as one."

"Treat me as you will, but leave my presence."

"Here's your breakfast coming; you shall be left alone for a couple of hours, I will then come back to you."

At the same moment Paul came in with the breakfast; Isabel shuddered as she beheld a man sent to wait upon her; she knew not of Barbara's death, and concluded he must be sent as being a greater enemy to the human race than she was.

Paul was as a man, what Barbara was as a woman, cruel to the utmost; delighting in his master's profligacy, capable of every crime. He took a general survey of her, evidently enjoying the wretchedness of her situation, he continued gazing for a minute or two, then put down the board and left the room, carefully fastening the door as Barbara used to do.

All this time Isabel was perishing with cold; she drew near to the fire and burst into tears. "Albert!" cried she in a paroxysm of despair;

"my injured Albert! save your unfortunate Isabel; Oh, save me!—My poor heart will burst with grief; I stand between murder and dishonour, and, alas! I have no friend to aid me. If my Albert did but know of my captivity, if he could but find me out amidst these barbarous walls, he would save me at the peril of his life. O God, have mercy upon me!" She dropt down upon her knees, and clasped her hands together: "forsake not unprotected innocence; my God, have mercy upon me: in pity save me!" Almost choaked with tears she could utter no more, she felt her strength going, and endeavoured to gain the sofa, but in vain, she sunk down senseless upon the ground. After laying a considerable time she revived again and reseated herself near the fire; she then took some trifling refreshment. Having finished her slender meal she proceeded to reconnoitre the room: her first care was to examine the sliding door, in which she found the hole she had bored with the point of the dagger. She returned to the fire and cut off a piece of wood from one of the burning chumps;

she modelled it into a strong peg which she concealed for the purpose of securing the panel: she then put back her breakfast knife upon her plate, and carefully picked up the chips, which she threw into the fire that they should not cause her detection.

Had she been certain of being left for some time to herself, she would gladly have taken a little sleep, as she was much exhausted from the cold and fatigue she had suffered during the preceding night; but the Marquis's promise of returning in a couple of hours kept her upon the watch and prevented her taking the rest which she so much wanted.

Isabel had no other dress than the one in which she had been carried off from the castle of Briançon; it was of splendour to suit the occasion for which it had been made, but ill-suited the situation to which she was reduced. Her hair was dishevelled, and the ornaments with which it had been adorned were confusedly jumbled together. She looked for the implements of the toilet which had, during her first imprisonment, been left for use, but they were

removed away. She nevertheless took off all the jewels with which her head was strewed, and smoothed her hair as well as she could. She then tore off the petticoat part of her upper dress, and depriving it of its costly trimmings, converted it into a kind of scarf, which she pinned closely round her shoulders. Her jewels she carefully concealed, thinking they might be of use for the purpose of bribery.

She had not long completed her arrangements, when the bolts were undrawn and the Marquis de Morbiere made his appearance. He looked at the change her dress had undergone, and said with a ferocious tone of voice, which thrilled through her veins, "Who has been here?"

"No one, save your domestic."

"'Tis false; some one has furnished you with dresses."

"No one has."

"Where did you get them, then?"

"I have none but what I brought with me."

"'Tis false, I say; tell me this instant who has been here?"

"No one, Sir."

"If you deceive me, young lady, you shall repent it; upon my word I will make you smart for your falsehoods."

Isabel finding herself disbelieved, determined to be silent, and took no notice of the many questions which he put her in rapid succession. Several times he darted towards her, apparently with an intention to strike her, but as often retreated; at last, however, as she persisted in her silence, he became furious and tore off the scarf which she had made from her dress; but to his great mortification he discovered his mistake, and recognised the dress she had on when he was with her in the morning.

"Insolent wretch," exclaimed the insulted Isabel; "you must indeed be base to commit such an outrage."

"I beg your pardon, Isabel," said he, holding out his hand to her; "I thought some one had been here without my permission, and had brought you clothes."

"And if they had, would it have been more than common humanity?"

"Promise to be less cruel to me, and you shall have all you want."

"I will promise nothing, but to despise you as long as I live."

"You are a foolish girl."

"Send me away then."

"No, no, I will keep you here to teach you wisdom. Promise, I say, to be more gentle with me, and you shall have dresses and jewels, and all you can wish for."

"Have you the infamy to make me such a proposal? for shame, Sir, you are a disgrace to your sex."

"Isabel, once for all, be more sparing of your abuse; resistance is vain; you must promise to give up your de la Lance, you owe it me for my long affection."

"I owe you nothing but hatred and contempt, and you have both: you have blackened your name by crimes of too dark a complexion for me to feel otherwise towards you. Cease

your persecutions and restore me to my family; it will save you from being despised by the world."

"The world's nothing to me; you are every thing, and you I will have; think of it, Isabel. I will not detain you now, you must want rest."

"I do indeed."

"Then you shall have it; I will come to you again in the evening." So saying, he left the room, and fastened the door after him.

Isabel was so sleepy that she was obliged to throw herself upon the bed to rest for a while; she did not take any of her clothes off, but rolled herself up in a blanket, and exhausted nature soon resigned her to a calm repose, in which she continued until Paul made his appearance with the dinner. He placed it down upon the table, and eyeing her with great minuteness, said, "Is there any thing you want, which I can get you?"

"Get me the means of escape from this castle," said Isabel.

"You apply to the wrong person for that; you mistake me, young lady."

"Then you may retire."

"You want to be alone, do you?"

"Yes."

"Then I must go, I suppose. You're a mighty odd kind of young lady, I must own."

"Your services are not wanted, you may retire."

"Thank you; but as yet you are not mistress of this castle, so I don't choose to be ordered about by you: I will go when I please, and stay as long as I please, without asking your leave." He said no more, however, but left the room, muttering something which Isabel could not understand.

She took a very slight meal, and when Paul had returned and taken away the dinner things, she laid herself down upon the bed, and turned over in her mind the miseries she had endured; but her love for Albert seemed to reward her for so many sufferings, and give her courage to bear them.

At a late hour in the evening the Marquis de Morbiere came back to her room. "Well, Isabel," said he, "have you thought of what I said to you?"

"No, Sir."

"I must have your answer; will you give up all thoughts of your lover?"

"Never!" she exclaimed with wonderful spirit.

"Think of your folly; can you be mad enough to think your family will ever consent?"

"I owe you no confession, Sir; whatever my thoughts are, such they will remain."

"You must love me, Isabel; by heavens you shall give up my detested rival, or I will cut out his heart before your own eyes."

"You are base enough for any thing."

"Give me your hand; come, Isabel, we won't quarrel."

"Keep back, Sir; let me out of your castle, and I promise never to say another word to you."

"I have already told you, that you shall not pass my gates until you become mine, I am

determined, and will never let you out of my power; you have given me too much trouble as it is."

"You have been so many times answered," said Isabel, with dignified composure, "that I need not waste my words; my mind has long been made up. I will never marry you."

"Do you mean to say you will never change your mind."

"I do."

"Since mild means have no power over you, I will try other means. Hallo, Carl!—Paul!—come in." They both rushed into the room. "Lead this mad girl to the dungeons."

Carl and his associate immediately seized her; she screamed most dreadfully, but they were too hardened to mind her, and the Marquis led the way bearing a torch in his hand. When they had proceeded some distance, he desired Carl to stop, and asked her whether she had changed her mind, but her answer was even more determined than ever. She again screamed with the most piercing cries, as Carl went on again, but it only brought fresh insults

down upon her, for no one came to her assistance.

The Marquis lighted the way and proceeded on until he came to the range of dungeons; Isabel was then commanded to walk, which she did with a firm step.

They took her into the first dungeon, which was low, dark, and piercing cold. Then in the next, in which laid a quantity of bones, "Behold them!" said the Marquis; "they were once covered with flesh and blood; they were the victims of their obstinacy." They next entered the third dungeon, in which laid the unconsumed remains of the unfortunate female. "Look," said he, pointing to the corpse. Isabel gazed in unutterable horror upon the dreadful object; her eyes instantly dried; she stood transfixed like a marble statue, pale and motionless.——"Look," said he, again; "change your mind, or you shall share the same fate." Isabel tried to speak, but she could not, her tongue cleaved to the roof of her mouth, her lips were immoveable, her eyes turned not from the putrid corpse. He

watched her countenance with apparent triumph; but her eyes, which had for some time been fixed upon the female, gradually closed, and she fell back. Here would have ended all her sufferings, had not Carl caught her up in his arms, for her unprotected head was just dashing against the wall.

The Marquis fancied she was dead, and had her quickly carried back to her room, where she was laid upon the bed, whilst he ran to his apartment to fetch something to try to revive her. The fears of the first moment proved to have been without foundation, for though she breathed slowly and with difficulty, she was evidently alive.

CHAPTER XI.

By degrees Isabel revived, but it was only to return to a full sense of the horrors which had been exhibited to her in the dungeon. She looked wildly round, evidently searching for the decaying corpse, and she trembled convulsively as if her heart recoiled from the object which her eyes searched for; the moment they fixed themselves upon the Marquis de Morbiere, she uttered a loud and piercing shriek, and fell into violent hysterics.

Had the Marquis ever repented of an act of wanton cruelty it would have been at this moment; for the deplorable state of the unhappy Isabel was enough to fill the most hardened heart with anguish. He felt otherwise, however, for he flattered himself to have frightened her sufficiently to bring her to submission; but how little did he know what heroic virtue can do, what an unprotected female is capable of,

when urged on by a continued series of barbarity.

The Marquis thought from the agitation of her mind, that she would relapse into hysterics, if he persisted for the present in his cruelties; he therefore told her that he would leave her to herself for the night, and would see her again in the morning. The assurance was a great relief to her, although she did not trust to the truth of his promise. He told Paul where he would find a bundle which he desired him to bring. When the man returned, the Marquis informed Isabel that the bundle contained the dresses which were found in the room after her escape, reminding her how much he must value every thing that belonged to her, to have taken so much care of them. She made no comment upon his artfulness, and he retired with Carl and Paul, wishing her a good night, and begging her to think of him.

Isabel was aware that his change of tone was only the forerunner of further enormities; she judged by experience, and was not mistaken.

No sooner had he left the room than she got

off the bed, although scarcely able to bear herself upon her legs, and pushed the peg which she had made into the hole bored during her former imprisonment in the sliding door. Secure as far as this door went, she began barricading the other in the same manner as she had done before. But, what were the thoughts which hurried upon her mind as she piled up the furniture against the door? The remembrance of the ghost was so present to her heated imagination that she almost fancied she saw its large plumes waving in awful agitation: she thought she beheld those piercing eyes which seemed capable of prying into the inmost recesses of the soul. She thought she heard the loud crash which preceded the appearance of the spectre. Willingly indeed would she have hailed its re-appearance at the present moment; yes, what would have been most horrible to her persecutor, would have been most welcome to herself.

Having completed her arrangements, she gathered up the scattered logs of wood in the chimney, and renewed the fire for the night;

she then opened the bundle, and took out such things as were required; and being re-attired, she laid herself down upon the bed, and rolled herself up in a blanket. For some hours she watched anxiously, thinking that the spirit might appear again, and save her from her miserable situation, but it came not, and giving up all hopes, she exclaimed in heart-rending agony, "Alas! I am forsaken." She wept on until she completely exhausted herself; sleep for a time relieved her of her cares, and she did not awake until a violent knocking at the door roused her from the bed. It was broad day-light, and after listening for a while, she recognised the voice of Paul who wished to know whether she was dressed and ready for her breakfast. She answered in the negative, and the man said he would come again in half an hour. At first she dreaded that he had tried to open the door, and finding it fastened, would take away the furniture with which she barricaded it; but her fears were removed by the remembrance that she had not heard the bolts undrawn. She hastened to

take away the chairs and tables, and replace them in the manner in which they were before.

Paul was punctual to his time, brought in the breakfast, and asked her (from his master,) whether she would like his company; to this she gave a positive negative, and he went away muttering oaths and threats which were evidently meant for her ear, but which it appeared he did not dare speak out.

The little Isabel felt herself capable of taking, she took as soon as it was brought in, fearful that the Marquis de Morbiere would pay his promised visit, or in defiance of her forbidance would come to breakfast with her; she had long done, however, before he undrew the bolts and let himself into the room. The sight of him turned her blood cold as ice; she knew him to be the murderer of the unfortunate female in the dungeon, and it was enough, had he done no more, to stamp upon his face the history of his deeds; Isabel could read in his looks the crimes of his life. Horrible it was indeed to be in the power of such

a man, and to consider that he knew no mercy, and was dead to all those better feelings of which so few, even of the worst men, are void. He placed a chair familiarly by her side, and said, "How does my dear girl do this morning? did you dream of me?——Why don't you answer and tell me how you do?——You seem determined to provoke me! well, since that is the case, I insist upon knowing what line of conduct you mean to adopt. Will you love me?"

"No!" replied the heroic girl in the most determined manner.

"You wont! do you mean to say you can't love me?"

"I neither will or can love you; that is my meaning."

"Will you promise to remain with me without being forced to it?"

"Never."

"Then you shall go and keep company with the young woman in the dungeon, who was just such a stupid headstrong girl as yourself."

"I am ready to die!"

"You are mighty brave; I would like to try your mock-heroism."

"I tell you, Sir, I would rather submit to a thousand deaths than to live a day in your presence: the corpse of the murdered is less odious to me than the face of the murderer."

"Insolent wretch, you shall pay me for this."

"I am no wretch: happy would it be for you if you had so little to answer for."

"Isabel, you have tried me to your utmost; you have lavished more insolence upon me than I ever pardoned from any woman: I tell you once more, and I swear to you, that unless you promise to reject your arrogant lover, and consent to make over that affection to me, you shall be chained to the same stone with the girl below, and we shall see whether her mouldering carcass will not bring you to your senses."

Isabel saw by his manner that he was determined to put his threat into execution; she thought, therefore, that if she could gain time her friends might come to her assistance.

"What time will you give me to consider your proposal."

"Three days."

"It is not long enough."

"A week then.

"Very well: in a week you shall know my final determination: but what guarantee do you give me for my peace until then?"

"I swear to you by all that is most sacred, that you shall not be questioned upon the subject for a week."

"You must swear more: you must swear to leave me by myself for a week."

"No, Isabel, I must see you every day."

"Will you swear then to pay your visits but once a day; it is the only chance you have of a favourable answer."

"I consent then, if you allow me to see you every morning after your breakfast."

"Granted."

"Give me your hand then."

Isabel gave him her hand, although it appeared to her as if she thrust it into a vessel of human blood. Such was his vanity that he

flattered himself with having triumphed over her, and allowed himself to be deceived into a belief that she really began to change her mind. He attributed his success, however, to a cause which any other man would have disclaimed with horror, to the scenes which he had made her witness the night before. This suspension of hostilities kindled a ray of hope within her breast; but heavy were the hours which followed, for she looked for friendly aid, and none appeared.

Her unprincipled persecutor did not long stay with her; he said he had business of importance to transact which would detain him some hours, he therefore took leave of her and promised to pay her a visit on the following morning.

Isabel was comparatively happy when left to herself, she was then at liberty to reflect upon her deplorable situation, and upon the chances she had of escape from her detested prison. The murdered female was constantly before her eyes, even in the logs of blazing wood she could almost trace her likeness.

She had never before seen a human corpse, and the sight was associated with so many dreadful ideas, that the more she thought of it the more shocking the impression became. That a man should commit so barbarous an act, that he should put to death, by means of long continued tortures, a helpless female, whose only crime was being too virtuous; that he should allow her body to remain unburied and exposed to all kinds of outrages, and that he should exhibit such a terrible specimen of his own depravity with a view to frighten another female from her duty, was more than she could comprehend; the whole appeared a dream, a shadow which had passed before her eyes.

She never was guilty of deceit before, and now she was driven to dissemble to save her life; it was surely excusable, and yet she was not pleased with herself for having been frightened into what she would not have done at any other time. The thought suddenly struck her that she would be likely to escape if she could withdraw the sliding door, and make her way through the inhabited part of the castle.

She considered a long while whether she should make the attempt or not, and at last determined to run all risks: she accordingly pulled out the peg which she had put into the panel, and endeavoured to slide it open, but it was securely fastened on the other side, rendering it quite impossible to open it from the room in which she was confined.

Her next essay was at the window, thinking it possible that she could, by removing one of the iron bars, make a sufficient opening to let herself through, then slide down, by means of slips of blanket tied to each other, into the court beneath, from which she hoped to be able to make her escape. Paul's entrance stopt her in her proceedings, and she with difficulty concealed the dagger which was in her hand at the time when he undrew the bolts and unlocked the door. There was something hurried in her appearance which seemed to rouse his fears, and caused him to look about him very attentively; but Isabel guessed what he was doing, and by diverting his attention to

her dinner by asking some common-place question about it, put the man off his guard: she thus succeeded in avoiding his scrutinizing looks. She was nevertheless much frightened, thinking he had seen the movement she made to conceal the dagger, but she was mistaken, as he only noticed something hurried which indicated that he had come at an unseasonable time.

It may well be imagined that Isabel had no great appetite for her dinner; she ate so little that the sulky old attendant, who chose for the first time to wait upon her, remonstrated upon the little honour she did the extra good things which were this day sent her by order of his master. This improvement in her diet was probably occasioned by the hopes with which he was impressed. Finding that she did not improve, the man remonstrated again, telling her how angry his master would be if he knew the little she took to sustain her. He appeared nettled that his remonstrances were so unattended to, and again muttered something to

himself which she tried to make out, but her effort was as vain as on former occasions, and he did not seem at all disposed to communicate his thoughts. If he grumbled and muttered unintelligible words, it was at least a comfort to Isabel that he was not so communicative and insolent as Barbara, although he had given a fair proof of what he was capable of doing in conducting her to the dungeons.

When he returned to her room in the evening, she noticed a considerable change in his appearance; he looked more solemn, and seemed to be plodding over some dark scheme of destruction. He spoke not a word, renewed the fire, did what was necessary in the room, and nodding to his prisoner, as if to wish her good night, retired and fastened the door. Isabel immediately began the laborious operation of piling up chairs and tables against the door, and placing them so as to prevent its being opened. She then rolled herself up in a blanket, and having offered up to her Maker a fervent prayer for the happiness and safety of her Albert, for her speedy

delivery, and for her family and friends, she fell into a quiet slumber.

Early in the morning Isabel arose, and replaced the order of her dress; Paul soon after brought her breakfast, and in a few moments the Marquis de Morbiere entered the room. He looked quite furious, and eyed her with inexpressible contempt. "Well, Madam," said he, "so you have desired the assistance of a parcel of adventurers, have you?"

"I know not what you mean, Sir; pray explain yourself." She said this with so much genuine innocence, that it quieted his fears at once, and he thought it most prudent not to awaken hopes of escape, by telling her of the visit he had received on the preceding day.

"Never mind, Isabel," said he, "I made an awkward mistake, I meant nothing by it; give me your hand, my dear."

This was almost a death-blow to her; she hesitated a moment, and trembling gave it.

"Well, Isabel, have you thought of me?"

"You promised not to ask me a question of the kind for a week; this is but the first day."

"Surely I may remind you of it."

"I shall not forget it; you must keep to your engagement."

"That is all very well, Isabel; I never meant to bind myself down so narrowly; you must let me speak to you of what so nearly concerns me."

"I claim the fulfilment of your promise; I said I would consider your proposal, and give you an answer in a week from this day."

"A week from yesterday."

"No, Sir, from to-day; I consent to no other terms."

"You are a strangely obstinate girl; I greatly fancy you are but making a fool of me."

"You may of course fancy what you will; what I promise, I do; and have a right to claim the same of you."

"So be it then;—should you deceive my hopes, then, Isabel, your fate will be terrible."

"You seem to have extraordinary ways of gaining a woman's affection, by making yourself out a tyrant."

"It is no joking matter, Isabel; my mind is fully made up."

"Very well, you shall have my answer in a week from this day."

To this proposition he again agreed, and soon after left Isabel to return to the inhabited part of the castle, where active preparations were already making for its defence.

The Marquis de Morbiere's mind was by no means at ease, as the number of his opponents promised to be much greater than he could muster to meet them. He had, however, one great point in his favour, he was surrounded with strong walls, against which the enemy's horsemen could not be brought into action.

Having effectually persuaded Adrien de Barsas that he had never been concerned in the carrying off of his sister, and having moreover as firmly persuaded him that Albert de la Lance was alone concerned in it; he imagined a plan as bold as it was impudent, and immediately put it into execution. He wrote to the Count de Barsas, informing him that the Barons

de Rochefort and Ferneuf had offered him the greatest insult by accusing him of having carried off Isabel; he protested most solemnly, upon the honour of a brave knight, that he knew nothing of her, and was innocent of the charge so insolently brought against him. He appealed to him as a friend, and more especially in virtue of the warm and honourable love which he still bore his sister, to come to his assistance, and lend him as large a force as he could possibly muster; adding that he expected his castle would be attacked in a few days, and that no time must be lost in sending the force of which he could dispose.—This memorable epistle he dispatched soon after the unceremonious visit of the Barons, and was in hourly expectation of his answer; having ordered his courier not to delay his return.

The courier did not reach the castle of Barsas till the middle of the night, although he pushed on his steed at a most unmerciful rate, without allowing the poor animal the least refreshment or rest.

Great indeed was the surprise which the

arrival of such an untimely messenger created at the castle. He was not admitted until a message had been sent to the Count, to know his good pleasure concerning the stranger, who represented himself as bearer of a dispatch from the Marquis de Morbiere. He was immediately ordered to be admitted.

Although the Count was a sound sleeper, and was generally very wrath when disturbed from his rest, he did not evince the least impatience on the present occasion, but took the packet and perused its contents His astonishment equalled his indignation; he thought his friend an injured man, and at once determined to lend him his assistance. The warder who carried the letter to his bedside reminded him that the courier waited for an answer. He desired writing materials to be brought him, and wrote these few words:

"Within four days, you shall have five hundred stout men in metal; had I twenty thousand you should have them; I will be with you to-morrow."

The letter was in an instant sealed, and de-

livered to the messenger, who had scarcely time to take a crust of bread and a cup of wine. It was found that his horse was too much exhausted to resume the journey, for the moment it got into the stable it laid itself down completely done up. The Count was informed of the circumstance, and ordered him to be furnished with another steed. The one they selected for him was suited to the occasion; it was fleet and fiery, so that the man had fair hopes of returning home some hours within the time allowed him for the journey.

When he arrived at the castle of Morbiere, the portcullis was quickly raised, and he galloped into the court-yard, where his lord was giving directions for the expected event.

For a moment he hardly dared open the letter, for fear it should contain something which might relate to his atrocities, or a refusal of the favour which he had stooped to ask.—He broke the seal, and was again startled by the few lines which the letter contained; he turned away to avoid the eyes which were fixed upon him, and walked many paces before he sum

moned sufficient courage to peruse the eventful billet. At last he made a bold resolution, and read with unutterable joy the consoling words which it contained. The news was too good to be long kept to himself; he told his people that he had quarrelled with several nobles, who had formed a confederation against him, and threatened to attack his castle; but that he would be able to punish them for their insolence, as the Count de Barsas promised him five hundred men in metal; a number which, added to his own, would be sufficient to drive back the enemy into their own castles.

Encouraged by the powerful assistance which his infamous falsehoods procured him, he became doubly brisk, and hurried his men to get every thing as forward as possible.

One circumstance filled him with doubtful apprehensions, Baba was no where to be found, he had searched every corner of the castle, and it was not until inquiry was made of the warder, that he learnt his having gone off with the Barons. He became furious, stormed, threatened to dismiss the warder, and swore

destruction to the jester if ever he should fall in his way. But his oaths and his anger were alike useless, Baba was safe beyond his reach.

Thinking it impossible that he could ever leave so good a place without a prospect of bettering himself, he felt convinced that the Barons had decoyed him away, either to take him in the same capacity as he held under him, or that he might serve as a guide in their attack upon the castle. The latter conclusions caused him some alarm, for he knew Baba to be fond of becoming acquainted with every place and thing within his range, and consequently to have long since become master of every nook about the inhabited part of the castle; but was convinced that he was totally ignorant of the mysteries of the other part. This thought somewhat quieted his fears, as the disclosure of the true state of the supposed forsaken portion of the castle would bring him to everlasting disgrace, if not into the hands of the law.

The first escape of Isabel de Barsas and of her maid, with the flight of his confidential jester, were circumstances which occasioned

the Marquis de Morbiere considerable anxiety. He was aware that Baba knew a tale or two which would tell infinitely to his disadvantage; but the others knew of his infamy, and must long before Isabel's second capture have proclaimed to the world, what he had hitherto so successfully concealed by murdering those who had it in their power to make him known. This cruel policy he had very frequently exercised, and had done it with the most wanton degree of barbarity.

For the same reason he was determined to murder Isabel should she hold out; and even to commit the same horrible act as soon as he should be tired of her. The unfortunate female in the dungeon had met her death by reason of the same wanton policy, and her melancholy end was the type of the fate reserved for the virtuous girl who was now in his power.

The greatest proof of his complete want of feeling was his taking her to the dungeon, where he not only pointed out what he intended her to suffer, but also displayed his

baseness; which he would never have done had he been willing to spare her life. That Isabel was singled out for a victim, whether resisting or unresisting, there could be no doubt, and every thing tended to strengthen the belief. As for herself, her mind was made up, and she tried to argue herself into the necessity of a solemn preparation for another world. Thinking that every day might be her last, she took a kind of leave of all she held dear, and endeavoured to think with composure of the man from whom she was about to be removed until they should meet again in heaven: but as her mind soared on high, her heart lingered behind, and she found how difficult it is for earthly beings to leave the soil which gave them birth. Still it was not the world that caused Isabel so much regret, it was her Albert, the man for whom she suffered so much, and who was persecuted for her sake.

Every succeeding hour hurried on her fate; six days more and the time she had fixed for the dreadful crisis would be at hand: only six

short days! how brief the time, how melancholy the prospect! She thought it almost a sin to sleep when she had so few hours to live; it was wasting the time which might be more profitably spent. She felt she had no alarming account to give of herself; her life had been well spent; she had injured no one; she was resigned.

As these awful thoughts crowded upon her mind, the remembrance of the events which occurred during the last days of her residence at the castle of Barsas, would mingle with them. Her father's dying blessing, and his persuasion of Albert's honour, were truly consoling to her; she thanked God that he was spared the news of the tragic end to which she was looking forward, and from which there seemed to be no possibility of escape. She did not reproach her mother for her hard-hearted cruelty, although she was in a great measure the author of her present sufferings, by her obstinate hatred for Albert de la Lance, who could have protected her from the snares of her

enemy. She forgave her from the bottom of her heart, and hoped that she might be more just to her memory, than she had ever been to herself. Isabel was not aware that she was no more.

CHAPTER XII.

THE family of Rolincour did all they could to prevail upon the Barons de Rochefort and Ferneuf to remain with them a day or two, but the situation of Isabel was too critical to admit of delay, and themselves too devoted to her cause to impede it. Before they retired to rest they took leave of their hospitable hosts, and at a very early hour in the morning they left the castle on their return to the Duchess de Briançon, who anxiously waited their arrival, in hopes that they might bring back the universally beloved Isabel. Making the best of their way, they reached the end of their journey about noon, their men and themselves equally dejected with the total failure of the undertaking.

When they arrived at the castle, their looks told the fatal truth, and every eye of either sex was filled with tears; it was a deadly blow.

The Duchess, whose warm heart had made her entertain great hopes of success, was truly wretched; Susan was more so if possible, and Robert was completely agonized.

"Don't cry," said the veteran; wiping his own eyes, which were as moist as the rest: "crying will do no good. Muster your men, and let us take by force what is refused us by fair means; where is the young Duke?"

"Here am I," said the Duke; "and as miserable as any."

"We may still hope," resumed the veteran; "but we must have men. Ferneuf and I, delivered the declaration to the Marquis de Morbiere, in answer to which he threw his gauntlet to us. The challenge is of course accepted, and we unite like brothers to punish him. Here, take my horse and let us meet in the hall, that we may determine at once what to do."

"We have been active here," said the Count de Moselle; "the Duke has mustered six hundred hardy vassals who will fight like lions. I have sent home an express to order a levy of five hundred men; the Marquis de Beaupré

will furnish four hundred, besides what the rest can muster."

"I will produce four hundred," said the Baron de Ferneuf.

"And I," exclaimed the veteran, "will send five hundred. The Baron de Rolincour promises to send three hundred more, commanded by his son Henry, who is worthy of a victory."

They proceeded into the hall, where they immediately made the necessary arrangements, and the contributing nobles sent expresses to their several castles, that their men should march without loss of time; they intimated their destination and the cause of the steps which they had been led to adopt. The place agreed upon as the general rendezvous was the beginning of the wood, close by the dwelling of honest la Bruyère, the farmer who had so kindly assisted Margaret in her escape from the castle of Morbiere, by conveying her upon his grizzle horse to the Croix d'Or. The time fixed for all parties to meet was on the evening of the third day.

No sooner were these preliminaries settled than all the persons who had signed the manifesto sat down to write the necessary dispatches; the Baron de Ferneuf and the veteran did the same, notwithstanding their being much fatigued with their journey, owing to the great weight of metal which they carried. They would take no refreshment before they had completed their instructions, and saw the messengers fairly on their horses before they rested or ridded themselves of their armour.

The ladies looked on quite delighted with the hope which these preparations revived of the restoration of Isabel: they encouraged the warriors to their utmost, and helped making up the packets. This they requested as a favour, that they should have the credit of having contributed something towards the desired end.

At length the task being completed, the travellers eased themselves of their metal and partook of a hasty meal, for which they seemed to have gained an appetite by the

praiseworthy deeds which they had been doing.

Mary de Moselle was not inactive, she had been busily employed working the Duke a sword belt, as she wished him to wear it for the first time on his approaching march. He turned out to be much more of a lady's man than his mother had ever allowed, for he watched Mary in her work, and seemed much intent upon the manner in which she handled her needle. His friends discovered that he watched the hand and not the needle, and the worker instead of her embroidery, but he had not the least idea that they could suspect him of any thing but a wish to learn. He nevertheless got much quizzed, and took it with the greatest good humour.

The mirth which was thus created did not last above a minute, the mind was too full of the sad occurrences which had so lately taken place, it could dwell upon nothing else.

Robert was very unhappy for his mother's

death, which, together with the loss of his beloved sister, preyed deeply upon his mind; and stamped a look of wretchedness upon his face Susan of course felt as he did. If he was sorrowful, she was naturally the same, for she entered into all the feelings of his heart, and shared his sorrows as his joys.

Her mother seeing her children so melancholy could not be cheerful, or even appear so before her guests; in every part of the castle therefore the same appearance prevailed.

Robert had greater fears for the life of Isabel than he even dared mention to his wife. The Marquis de Morbière's inhumanity left no hope, and the delicacy of her health rendered it highly probable that the terrors and privations which she suffered would put an end to an existence already rendered burthensome by so many acts of cruelty which had been exercised against her.

Robert was naturally lively, but he was now the reverse, and the tender soothings of his lovely wife, consoling as they were, had

not the power to remove the deep melancholy which overshadowed his heart and spirits.

It was not till the travellers had taken some refreshment, after having dispatched the couriers, that they thought of telling of the addition they brought in their troop. Baba was relating his tale of woe to the astonished multitudes assembled round the kitchen fire to hear him, at the time that his name was mentioned in the saloon. He was not a little pleased or his hearers a little mortified when he was summoned to the Duchess's presence, nor was he allowed to obey until he had pledged himself to finish his story on his return.

Baba hastened to the saloon, where he was greeted with every mark of kindness; his having saved Margaret at the peril of his life was too magnanimous an act to be forgotten. The interest of the scene was greatly heightened by the entrance of Margaret herself, who came to know what hopes they could give her of her mistress's restortion. She had not yet heard of Baba's arrival, and the

moment they beheld each other they rushed into each other's arms and mingled together tears of unaffected joy. In a moment however the blushing girl remembered herself, and her confusion at having been saluted by Baba before so large an assemblage of her superiors, so overcame her that she knew not which way to turn to hide her confusion; he was little less ashamed than herself. The Duchess remarked their painful situation, and congratulating both upon the cause of their joy, told them they might retire and that Baba would tell his story in the evening. The terms were promptly agreed to, and none regretted their own disappointment when they considered the happiness they caused to others.

In the mean time the veteran related more minutely than he had before done all that had occurred at the castle of Morbiere.

"So you think," said the Count de Moselle, "that he is capable of defending his castle against so large a force?"

"I do indeed," said the veteran, "the place was always strong, but it has been repaired

and fortified in a manner to add much to his means of defence."

"How many men do you think he can muster?" said the Marquis de Beaupré; "Five hundred or more?"

"I should think upwards of thrice that number, from the size of his estates and the number of his vassals who are able to bear arms."

"Do you suppose he will prepare for the attack which we are to make upon him?" said the Duke.

"I am persuaded of it," replied the veteran; "he knows we do not trifle with him, and he won't be such a fool as to let himself be caught without resistance."

"He seemed to ridicule our threat," said Ferneuf, "perhaps to intimidate us, or to impress us with a belief of his innocence; but his confusion when charged with having carried off Isabel was sufficient to criminate him if it had been possible to entertain a doubt on the subject: he is a despicable wretch."

"Every body will concur with you in that

opinion," said the Countess de Moselle, "and I pray that you may make an example of him."

"Let us alone for that," exclaimed the veteran, "we will teach him a lesson which he will not easily forget."

"How many men can you take against him?" said the Duchess, who was anxiously listening to every word they said.

"Much more than three thousand men," said the veteran: "a little army."

"Three thousand men!" exclaimed the Duchess; "surely it cannot be!"

"Pardon me, my good friend," said Ferneuf. "It is so, and we could muster as many more if this number was not sufficient for all purposes; only think the number of contributors we have; twenty powerful nobles, combining their forces together, we could muster men enough among us for a crusade."

"So you think we have men enough to beat him?" said the Duke to the veteran.

"I do," he answered; "but he is protected

by his walls, where every man is as good as three; he has to fight for his life, and will, I dare say, fight very desperately."

"Had we not better enlarge our number?" said the Marquis de Beaupré.

"No," replied the veteran: "if more come they will be acceptable, but as it is we shall do very well."

"When do you mean to attack him?" said the Marquis de Beaupré.

"The night we get there," replied the veteran.

"The night?" cried she.

"Yes, Madam," quoth Rochefort, "it is the best time for carrying a place, and for my part I look forward to the happiness of snatching his victim from within his very dungeons."

"Noble!" exclaimed the Duchess.

"It is right," quoth the veteran, "and it shall be done."

In this manner they talked over events to come, until Baba made his appearance.

"Well, Baba," said the Duchess, "how do

you feel now? have you told Margaret all your adventures?"

"Yes, Madam," replied the jester.

"Then let us hear them," said the veteran; "how did you manage to save her?"

Baba related the story with as much clearness as he could, and laid particular stress on the horror with which he had been filled on beholding the corpse of the murdered female mouldering away in the dungeon. As he told this part of the tale, every eye was intently fixed upon him, every heart was filled with horror.

"Can it be true?" exclaimed one of the party.

"Upon my oath it is," replied the jester with considerable warmth.

"Horrible!" exclaimed the veteran; "I never heard any thing so horrible."

If the gentlemen were so affected by the story of the unfortunate female, the ladies were much more so; tears of pity ran down their eyes, and they would gladly have enlisted under the banners of the gallant nobles to

avenge on the worthless Morbiere a death so horrible and inhuman.

"I think we shall make an example of him," said Ferneuf; "he will pay dearly for his enormities."

"I hope so," said the Duchess; "for he has thrown us all into sorrow and mourning, and there is no knowing who we shall have to weep for next."

"You must not talk so," said the veteran; "we will all of us fight hard enough for our lives; should any fall, he cannot die more gloriously than in the defence of virtue and innocence. What did we not do in Palestine? we did wonders there because we had the cause at heart, and it will be the same now. I could fight as desperately as in my younger days; I feel I could."

Susan did not like to betray the feelings of her heart, and retired; for her fears for Robert's safety were naturally great, and although she encouraged his going, and would have never forgiven herself had she attempted to dissuade him from it, she had not strength to

resist the melancholy impression of her mind, and could not refrain from tears which would have made him very unhappy had he seen them.

Robert's own breast was not at ease; he was thoroughly brave, but he grieved at leaving his wife, and considered that his chance was the common chance of war, perhaps to survive, perhaps fall in battle.

We do not mean to say that ties of long standing are less affectionate, or that people long married are less fond of each other than the newly wedded, but it is hard to be so lately united and so soon separated: Robert and Susan thought it so. No blame could be attributed to Isabel; she was the innocent cause of the terrible preparations which were so actively making in many renowned castles; she did not even know that any one had enlisted in her defence. What was felt for her, therefore, was pure affection, an ardent sense of the wrongs which were heaped upon her head, and unalloyed pity.

The veteran, although a bachelor from

choice, entered into the feelings of the married, and did all he could to prevail upon Robert to stay behind, but Susan rejected the kind offer with so much spirit that he ceased to urge his request, praising, at the same time, the exemplary self-denial which she exhibited for the recovery of her husband's sister. He saw, however, that grief lurked behind, and that she felt a sorrow which she would not impart.

Had Isabel been in safety, and Dominick with her, Margaret would have considered herself the happiest being in existence. Baba had long been dear to her, but since his having saved her she quite adored him. Until that event her hopes were somewhat darkened by the thought of his holding a situation which she considered humiliating and degrading; had he been the lowest menial in the castle of Morbiere she would have preferred it. Upon this point her ideas were perhaps too formal, as he had a good salary and an easy place, but with the exception of the stipend she considered his prerogatives as so many bars to his

respectability, to the comfort of a wife, and to his own happiness. He was now raised beyond her most sanguine wishes; his affectionate anxiety for her, and the manner in which he had saved her, gained him the admiration of his superiors, and established for ever his reputation as an honest man. His spirited conduct in presence of his merciless master, and his having sacrificed so lucrative a place in the cause of truth, did not contribute in a less degree to secure him the patronage of a number of nobles who would see to his future prospects in life, and secure his final happiness.

Yet with all these bright hopes Margaret sorrowed at heart for the loss of her mistress, and ceased not to offer up her fervent prayers for her early deliverance; but days passed heavily away without bringing any tidings of her, and she declared she would never marry Baba until her return, should she be away for twenty years. To this arrangement he made no opposition, for he entertained the sincerest

respect for her, and often assured Margaret he did not love her less than she did.

Besides her anxiety for her mistress, Margaret was much grieved for her father, who she knew to be wasting away in tears and lamentations; she saw no prospect of meeting him again, unless he would come to the castle of Briançon, where he might be certain of being made welcome for as long a time as he might be inclined to stay; but as Albert de la Lance considered such a step would endanger the safety of Isabel, he deferred his journey until a more favourable opportunity. Albert's opinion was given during the Countess's life-time, which rendered it probable that the caution might no longer be necessary, as Adrien was not likely to take sufficient interest in what happened to those with whom he was connected to take notice of Dominick's departure, or to care for the reason of it.

The whole of the day passed on without any thing new, besides the succession of preparations which were making in every part of the

castle, for the approaching campaign. Numberless men were quite indignant at not being called out, and petitioned to be allowed to join the warriors in any capacity. Some few were allowed to indulge their military ardour, to the great disappointment of others who hoped to have been selected.

The same spirit of adventure spread throughout the various domains as soon as it was known that an expedition was preparing against the castle of Morbiere. The Marquis was generally hated, particularly by the labouring classes, who gave much greater credit to the reports spread about him than their superiors, many of whom considered them too infamous to be believed.

In the forenoon of the second day Robert received a letter from Dominick; it was brought by a special messenger, and stated that warlike preparations were making at the castle of Barsas, and that the Count had on the previous day set out on horseback for the castle of Morbiere, having given secret orders to his first lieutenant; but that no one could

imagine where the men were going to; although they were very desirous of knowing, and suspected the forces were intended for the protection of the unworthy Marquis, who it was currently reported had been threatened with immediate attack by several nobles who had been at his castle.

The news of the loss of Isabel having spread like wild-fire, it soon became the subject of conversation in the neighbourhood of Barsas, where it did not fail to produce a strong sensation against the author of the crime, who had already become so obnoxious by the first carrying off of the favourite of the people. Dominick spread the alarm in every direction, and no sooner did he know that an armed force was mustering at the castle, than he hastened to his most intimate friends, assuring them that the Count was going to join the unworthy Morbiere, who was the murderer of his late master, and the ruffian who had carried off Isabel and his daughter. Every where he was heard with great earnestness, and so indisposed the vassals against their lord, that no-

thing short of the fear of severe punishment could induce them to obey the order to join at the castle of Barsas. Many determined to stand their chance, and positively declared they would not march without knowing and approving of their destination.

All this Dominick related in his letter to Robert, and added more in the one which he sent Margaret; be begged her to console herself, as there was no doubt of the Barsas vassals refusing to fight for the Marquis. He had urged their refusing to march at all, but in that respect he had been unsuccessful, as few had courage to risk their lord's displeasure, which he had the means of visiting so heavily upon them.

Margaret immediately brought Robert the letter, which he submitted with his own to the friends who were occupied in the deliverance of his sister.

Never was the veteran so furious; the idea of Adrien's joining the common enemy, the murderer of his father, and the persecutor of Isabel, was more than he could bear; he paced

the vast hall with agitated steps, addressed a few words to one, then a few to another, and swore he would show him no quarters, should he happen to fall in his way. Robert endeavoured to pacify him, by representing that the Marquis de Morbiere must have completely succeeded to establish a belief of his innocence; but the veteran thought no man should believe bare assertions in an affair of so much magnitude, he showed his preference by siding with him against all his older friends, it was an unpardonable insult to them, and he again assured Robert that ready as he was to lose his life to vindicate Isabel, so determined was he to punish the cruelty of her brother.

CHAPTER XIII.

In the course of the evening of the same day, an event happened which the best hopes of the allies could not have led them to foresee. A messenger brought a letter from Maurice Adellien to Robert, in which that excellent man stated, that the quarrels which had so long existed between the families of Barsas and Montfort, could be no reason for withholding from him the assistance which it was in his power to lend for the recapture of the young lady who had been so barbarously carried off by an unprincipled and mercenary man. He had never been in the wars, and was too old to turn soldier, or he would, for the first time of his life, lead the force of which he could dispose against the castle of Morbiere; he therefore placed his men under the command of Robert de Barsas, who was equally dear to him as a worthy knight, as to every per-

son on the domain of Montfort. The men were already informed of their destination, and of his views; they were ready to obey his orders. He further stated, that by noon on the next day, eight hundred well armed men would be at the cross roads beyond the Croix d'Or, where they would remain until joined by him; the letter ended with saying, that should a larger force be necessary, it would be immediately sent.

Robert carried the letter to his friends, who were no less astonished than himself at its contents.

"What shall I do?" said he to the veteran.

"Accept, by all means."

"I do not know him."

"Never mind, soldiers fight side by side, without knowing each other."

"'Tis true; but think what responsibility I get by accepting his generous offer."

"None at all; the man has a noble heart, you must not insult him by a refusal; tell me, Ferneuf, and you, Marquis de Beaupré, what would you do?"

"Accept without a question."

"And what would the Count de Moselle do?"

"As yourself, my good friend." You all know the character of Maurice Adellien; his only object is to save the unfortunate girl; no selfish motive can be attributed to him."

"None," replied Robert; "my only hesitation would be in commanding another man's troops."

"If you served the king," said the Count de Moselle, "you would be obliged to command his men."

"I fear you mistake my motive: I entertain the greatest veneration for Maurice Adellien, and know no man to whom I would rather owe an obligation, but I fear in case of ill-success much blame might be imputed to me."

"A wrong feeling altogether," said the veteran; "the more men we have, the better able we shall be to carry every thing before us. Perhaps you may have some scruples at being opposed to your brother: but you have your choice, either to hear of the murder of your sister, and leave her death unavenged, or to

bring your brother to his proper senses by showing your independence of him, and by punishing his friend."

"I no longer hesitate," quoth Robert; "I accept."

He immediately wrote an answer, expressing his gratitude, in the liveliest terms, for the generous assistance given him by Maurice Adellien, and assuring him that, to the latest period of his life, he would remember the noble manner in which he had come forward on the melancholy occasion which he so bitterly deplored.

Robert delivered the letter personally to the messenger, who was furnished with a fresh horse from the Duke's stable to return with; he promised to have his own steed sent after him by a man who could bring back the one lent him. As soon as he had refreshed himself, he started off again for the castle of Montfort.

Susan and her mother were much pleased by the prospect of success which the reinforcement promised them. The praise of Maurice

Adellien sounded in an instant throughout the castle, and every one was cheered with the formidable appearance they would make before the walls of the impious Marquis.

Robert was no less elated; he had been mortified by not having it in his power to muster a single man against the common enemy, when suddenly he was placed at the head of a larger force than any of his friends. The circumstance did not occasion pride, but it gave him the hope of distinguishing himself, and of being able to lend an assisting hand for the recapture of his beloved sister.

It was said (and with truth), that the vassals of the splendid domain of Montfort were the best soldiers in the province. It must naturally be the case, for a vast number of them had served under their two former lords in Palestine, where they gained many hard-earned laurels, and many deep wounds of which they still bore the honourable scars. Maurice promised eight hundred men, but he could raise as many thousands, and bring into the field a greater

force than any noble in the whole course of the Loire.

It was the first time since the murder of Philip de Montfort that he had interfered in the affairs of his neighbours, nor would he have done it on the present occasion, had the late Count and Countess de Barsas been alive. The contempt he entertained for the present Count rendered him very careless of his feelings towards him; and his esteem for the excellent character of Robert was a great inducement for coming forward on an occasion when he thought he could be of use to him.

The whole of the day had been very eventful at the castle of Briançon, as the six hundred men contributed by the Duke were despatched on their way to the seat of action. From the castle of Moselle four hundred had marched, and one hundred more were to follow in the course of the evening. In the like manner the four hundred furnished by the Marquis de Beaupré were on their route: the veteran's five hundred were among the first

to set forth; the Baron de Rolincour's three hundred, commanded by his son Henry, had nearly reached their destination; the Baron de Ferneuf's four hundred were on their way. According to Maurice Adellien's promise, eight hundred more must already have been upon their march, and about five hundred men furnished by the several other subscribing nobles; making altogether a force of nearly four thousand men, of which the infantry formed the greatest part.

Poor Isabel, who knew not that such mighty preparations were making for her deliverance, wasted away in tears, and looked forward with indescribable horror to the near approach of the day which she supposed would be the last of her life.

The Marquis still continued his morning visits, and never failed to remind her of her promise, and of the fate she had to expect if her answer should happen to be unfavourable. Such warnings were as many death-blows, they tore her heart with anguish, and made her al-

most wish to die before she should be called upon to give the expected answer.

"I must still hope," said she to herself; "for it is the last lingering feeling of the human breast; but what ground is there for hope? what chance have I? what prospect?—none!"

She noticed in her persecutor an air of triumph, which assured her that he had something in view by which his spirits were elated; and she discovered that whatever it was, it related to herself, as he betrayed that appearance every time he spoke to her of the answer she was to give him."

"It *must* be favourable," said he, on the same day as the troops set out for the rendezvous; "it cannot be otherwise. You are in my power, my pretty Isabel, and here you shall remain. The devil himself could not get you from these walls now; they are better guarded than you think for."

"You seem very proud of your unlawful power," said Isabel.

"Is this the way you speak to me? is this the change you promised? Have a care, Isabel; one moment may seal your fate; one single moment may see you from this comfortable room to the dreary dungeon. I dare say the girl down stairs will be glad of your company; she has been a long while by herself.

"Really, Sir, you do all you can to make me hate and despise you: if you go on thus, I fear my answer will not meet your wishes."

"Then, pretty Miss, you will please to think of changing your lodgings. The dungeon will not take long furnishing, nor will the kitchen require much preparation, a loaf of bread and a pitcher of water are easily procured: and after they are gone, you may go to——."

"Go where?"

"Go to hell if you please."

"I understand you not; please to explain yourself."

"You may starve; that's what I mean."

"Here!" she exclaimed, drawing the dagger

from under her dress; put me out of my misery."

"Rash girl," cried the Marquis, seizing it; "how came you by this weapon?"

"I will answer no more questions," replied Isabel; "you are bent upon murder, therefore murder me."

"You deserve it."

"Do it then."

"I am under a promise for a week."

"Your promises, or nothing, are the same to me; you pledged your word of honour not to molest me for a week; you have failed in your engagement, and are no longer worthy of belief."

"You are mad, Isabel."

"So much the better."

"You are the most headstrong girl I ever knew."

"I care not for that; you are a disgrace to human nature; I need not spare you."

He was leaving the room, taking the dagger with him—

"Give me back that dagger, Sir," cried Isabel.

"Never."

"Give it me back, I say, or put me out of my misery."

"Three more days, Isabel, and you may, perhaps, have it."

"I understand you, vile, contemptible man:—you anticipate my answer, I suppose?"

"Exactly so, Isabel."

"Go then, and come not near me; if I am to live but three short days, let me pass them in peace."

"What! Is your mind already made up?"

"It is."

"Then you must die."

"Kill me then!"

"Not so sweet a death, Isabel; you have made me drag on a lingering life, and you shall die a lingering death. What have you to say?"

"Nothing;—I am determined. I hate you and despise you; I can never change my mind;

it is useless to deceive you, I can never change."

"Is this your last word?"

"It is."

"So you have been playing the fool with me? go, vile slut." As he said these words, the ruffian struck her a violent blow upon the head, which laid her prostrate on the floor.

"Cruel barbarian," said she; "is it thus you treat a woman?" She rose up.

"Yes, you infernal jade, and so—" He again knocked her down.

"Oh! my father," cried the almost heart-broken girl; "my poor murdered father, could you but see your child so used by your murderer!"

"What!" cried the wretch—

"Do you call me a murderer?"

"I do."

"Then I will show you no mercy."

He darted instantly out of the room, bolted fast the door, and in less than ten minutes returned with Paul and Carl.

"Lead her away!" exclaimed the barbarian.

Isabel rose with majestic dignity, and went towards them.

"I am ready to follow," said she with a firm voice; "walk on."

Carl was so struck with her manner that he hesitated. "Is the girl deranged?" said he to his master.

"No, Carl, she is playing the fool."

"Show me the way," said she: "I am prepared for death."

"D—n you, take her off, I say; what the devil do you wait about?" Both the hirelings found their master was in earnest, and were going to secure their prisoner.

"Let me go, I will follow." So saying, Isabel walked forth towards the gallery leading to the castle.

"Stay, mad-brained girl," cried the Marquis, "I will try you your week."

"I may as well meet my fate at once."

"No, you shall stay here three days more, I will keep my word."

Carl pushed her back into the room.

"You see I am more merciful than you deserve.—You might at least be gracious enough to thank me for my lenity."

"Release me, and I will thank you for an act of justice."

"A likely joke," said Carl with a fiendish sneer; "no sooner catch the bird than let it go again."

"No, no," said Paul, "that won't do; will it, master?"

"No," said the Marquis; "here she shall stay for the remainder of her life: she is insolent enough in-doors, without going to tell lies out of doors."

"I never told a falsehood, Sir."

"Oh no! of course you're a saint; who does not know that?" This remark threw both the men into violent laughter.

The Marquis de Morbiere suddenly recollected that Adrien de Barsas, who had been his guest since the day before, might wonder what had become of him; he accordingly re-

lieved Isabel of his society, and hastened to join him. Carl and his associate also left the room.

No sooner was Isabel alone than the courage which she had so wonderfully exhibited, gave way to the horrible feelings which her situation naturally created. She wept bitterly, but tears relieved the bitter anguish of her heart. Death would have been less dreadful than the blows which she received from her unprincipled persecutor. Her head was very painful, and much swollen; it was not for the pain that she cared,—it was the insult which roused her indignation.

When the Marquis de Morbiere returned to the Count de Barsas, he apologized for being so long absent from him, and proposed leading him to see the great preparation which he had been superintending. The apology and the lie were equally well received, the Count did not object to the proposal, and his host led the way towards the great court.

"We are mustering very strong now," said he, pointing to some of the works; "we will receive them warmly if they come."

" How many do you think they will be?" said the Count de Barsas.

" It is impossible to tell," replied the other; " some few hundreds, I suppose."

" Very likely; it will not be a difficult matter to exterminate them. — How are your walls?"

" In perfect order; I have had them all repaired."

" Will they stand a heavy ram?"

" Stand any thing."

" How are your loop-holes, and your battlements?"

" In excellent order; very strong and numerous."

" Have you much provision on hand?"

" My good friend, what are you talking of? we have no need of a large supply; we have always enough for a week, surely that will see all our opponents in their graves."

" I should think so; it would go hard with us if it did not."

" It would indeed; but we have nothing to fear on that score. We shall pick them all off;

I have some of the best marksmen in the kingdom, they will hit any thing within the reach of their bows."

"We shall do then.—Are your towers in good order?"

"Come and see them." He led his guest from one tower to the other. Several were already supplied with large blocks of stone, intended to be thrown upon the enemy. He then conducted him to the armoury, where a fine display of arms was made; next to the guard-rooms, which were filled with warriors. In short, the castle was in a perfect state of defence on the side which was occupied; the other end, in which Isabel was confined, had not the appearance of being so well provided. Adrien remarked it, and asked the cause.

"It has been many years forsaken," replied the Marquis. "If they were to get in they could not do any thing, it is so completely separated from the rest."

"Would it not be prudent to have a force there, in case of attack?"

"Not the least, it would only be a waste of men; they never will think of attacking it; it is deserted, and I do not care if they take it; they can do no harm if they do."

This *ruse de guèrre* was ably played off upon the Count, who, of course took it for granted, that the uninhabited part was not worth fighting for, and so well separated from the remainder, that no advantage could be taken of its capture. The real truth was, that he feared inquiry might be made, that chance might discover Isabel's prison, or that her cries might reach the ears of persons who would immediately make the circumstance known. Besides, he dreaded the discovery of the bodies in the well, and of the female in the dungeon; any of which would be sufficient to bring him to an ignominious end.

Such was his policy that he would not allow any of the walls of the deserted part to be repaired; he chose rather that they should have an air of dilapidation. He had nevertheless got them secretly examined, and they

were found in very serviceable order, and capable of standing a long siege, without suffering considerable damage.

The Count de Barsas was much pleased with the forwardness of the preparations, and the activity with which they were carrying them on. Some trifling object which suddenly caught his eye, perhaps some expression of the Marquis's face, reminded him of the jester, and he immediately asked what was become of him."

"He is gone off."

"Where to?"

"With a farmer's daughter."

"Does he mean to marry her?"

"I believe so."

"I thought he was in love with my sister's maid?"

"So did I, till I heard of this."

Under pretence of giving orders the Marquis left his inquisitive companion, to find amusement for himself, and successfully escaped further interrogatories. The Count was somewhat disappointed, for he used to be

much amused with the jester in former days, until the time when he interfered in a quarrel between him and Robert: as there could be no fear of a recurrence of the scene at present, he would have been glad to have seen him.

During the whole of the evening the Marquis and Adrien were busily employed in drawing out plans for the defence of the castle, and for the better disposal of their troops. Orders were likewise given for the accommodation of the five hundred men who were to reinforce the garrison on the next day, and for providing stabling for their horses. The Count was not a little proud of an opportunity to display his newly acquired importance, by a specimen of the forces he was able to bring into the field at so short a notice; he therefore looked forward with anxiety to their arrival, and almost courted the coming of the enemy to exhibit his skill in command, and their bravery in combat.

None of the Count's neighbours respected him sufficiently to court his opinion, or to hold

any communication with him; he had consequently never been engaged in broils, or had he an opportunity of calling out his men on any previous occasion. It was unfortunate, for none could be more inglorious, and none so dangerous, as the expedition upon which he now appeared in defence of his despicable friend.

CHAPTER XIV.

At the appointed time Robert left the castle of Briançon amidst the tears and encouragements of his family and friends. It was a trying moment for Susan, but she met it with extraordinary fortitude.

When he arrived within a short distance of the cross-road which had been fixed upon for the place of rendezvous, he perceived a horseman, who on seeing a knight in full armour followed by several esquires, rode back from whence he came. Robert concluded he must have been placed there to watch his approach.

As he came within sight of the troops, his heart beat high, with martial spirit, and their fine appearance roused up feelings which had long been dormant. Their armour glittered like one solid mass of high polished steel. Maurice Adellien's first lieutenant rode forward, and bidding Robert welcome to the

command, which he resigned to him, handed him a letter with which he was entrusted; he thanked the gallant lieutenant for his civility; and read as follows:

"Brave Sir Knight,

"The bearer of this, with eight hundred men, are placed under your command, they will cheerfully obey you, and may God grant you victory and a safe return.

Signed, "MAURICE APELLIEN."

Robert was drawing near to address the men when they welcomed him with a loud and long continued shout: it was some time before silence was restored; he expressed what he wished to say by pressing his hand upon his heart, and when the loud plaudits ceased, he thanked them in the most grateful terms for the willingness they showed to assist in the recapture of his injured sister. The address was short, but it spoke to the feelings of all present, and by a second shout they made known their happiness to serve him.

The chivalrous spirit of the age was not

confined to the higher ranks; the lower were equally eager of combat, and as ready when called upon to defend the fair sex. The violence which Isabel had the first time suffered, had so excited the feelings of the vassals of the domains of Montfort and Barsas, that the least word from their lords would have raised a host of champions in her defence. When the repetition of the infamous act was known, all those feelings revived, and with them the same desire of serving her. No sooner had Maurice Adellien made known his intentions than a complete *levèe en masse* took place among his vassals, who were jealous of an opportunity of displaying their valour in the vindication of the popular idol: for Isabel was quite adored for her virtues, and as much pitied for her sufferings.

Robert reviewed the troops and found them in most perfect order. The lieutenant explained that if they had been intended to meet the enemy in the field, Adellien would have sent them all mounted, but as they were to act against a castle, he thought it most desirable

to send the greater part on foot; he accordingly ordered the marching of three hundred of the former, and five hundred of the latter.

Having already rested both horses and men, it was thought most expedient to proceed a little further that day, that less should remain to be done on the next. The infantry had started the evening before, and had only a couple of leagues to march to take up their position where it was agreed that the cavalry should meet them. Robert had baited at some distance from the place of meeting, and did not for the present require delay: he therefore gave the word of command, and marched his troops towards the castle of Morbiere.

Before sunset they arrived at a village within a league of la Bruyère's farm; the astonished rustics immediately informed them that a number of troops, both cavalry and infantry, had passed through on their way to, they knew not where; and begged Robert to tell them whether any great battles were going to be fought in their neighbourhood, by which they might be likely to lose their cattle and

little property. Until now, said they, no injury had been done them, but there was no knowing what might happen if so many fighting men passed their way. Robert endeavoured to pacify them by assuring them that no harm would come to them. Some of the men, more communicative than the rest, told them they were going to fight the Marquis de Morbière, for having carried away the lady Isabel de Barsas: their fears instantly changed to joy, they threw open their houses, bidding them be welcome to all they had, and many of them protested they would lend their assistance.

The village was small, and it was with the utmost difficulty the troops could procure shelter from the cold of the night; the weather was extremely severe, and although free from rain or snow it was very trying, particularly to the horsemen. By dint of exertion and the wish of the people to accommodate, Robert managed to get all the men lodged; some in cottages, others in barns, and many were content with a little clean straw in a stable. Ro-

bert was one of the number. Their horses, by being less numerous, were more easily provided for.

Notwithstanding the obligingness of the honest rustics, both man and horse would have been miserably off in this distant village had it not been for the thoughtfulness of Maurice Adellien, who had sent several waggons under escort of the troops, with sufficient provisions of all kinds to last them many days: a supply was dealt out to each, and after a hearty and jovial meal, each eased himself of his armour and betook himself to his humble bed.

Before day break the shrill sound of the trumpet announced it time to arise; none murmured at the early call, but all quickly arose, and taking their morning's meal, assembled at their post.

The pale rays of the rising sun began to afford sufficient light for Robert to see that none of his men were missing: he called them over, and finding them all under arms gave the marching order.

In less than two hours they reached the place determined upon for the rendezvous of the allies; but to Robert's great astonishment he discovered that none had yet arrived, but he saw a large body of men in armour, both mounted and on foot, coming towards him as if from the castle of Morbiere. The circumstance created some alarm, fancying that he might have been betrayed by the villagers, and that the Marquis de Morbiere was marching against him. After a few minutes' deliberation with the lieutenant, he formed his men in battle array and prepared for action, determined to keep his ground and await the enemy's attack.

When they drew nearer they appeared to be in great disorder, as troops after a defeat; they still marched on, and Robert thought he saw their helmets surmounted with crimson plumes, the colour of the Count de Barsas: yet he could not believe it possible, and desired the lieutenant to give his opinion: he looked earnestly and confirmed Robert in his belief.

"What can it mean?" said Robert.

"I cannot imagine, Sir Knight," replied the lieutenant.

"I know my brother promised to lend the Marquis an armed force, but I suppose they were intended to defend the castle, and not to attack us in the open field."

"They don't appear to meditate an attack, Sir Knight, they seem in too much confusion."

"Do you think they see the Montfort plume?"

"Certainly; being white it cannot escape their notice."

"How dare they approach then?"

"God knows! perhaps they have been sent back; and perhaps some of our forces may have reached the castle and cut them off."

"Very likely."

In a few moments more Robert recognised many old friends among the disbanded soldiers; he saw they intended nothing hostile, and rode up to them with his beaver raised. In compliment to Maurice Adellien, and to the corps placed under his command, Robert had

placed a fine white plume in his helmet instead of the crimson one which he always wore. The leader of the Barsas troops came forward to meet him, little suspecting himself so well known.

As Robert was about to address him, the warrior discovered who he was, and shouted out "Robert de Barsas! Robert de Barsas!" the name was hailed with joy, and the troops, fearless of hostility, joined the men of Montfort.

"What brings you this way?" said Robert; "I thought you were going to assist the Marquis de Morbiere?"

"We were ordered out," said the leader, "and we obeyed, but we knew not where the Count intended to send us; it was kept a profound secret."

"I thought the object of the expedition was publicly known."

"No, indeed, it was scrupulously kept from us: many suspected and hinted that we were to assist the Marquis de Morbiere, but we knew nothing for certain."

"How strong were you?"

"Five hundred."

"Who commanded you?"

"Your brother's first lieutenant."

"You are not five hundred now?"

"No, Sir Knight, we are about three hundred and fifty strong."

"Where's the rest?"

"With the Count."

"Where?"

"At the castle of Mòrbiere."

"How came you here then?"

"We were marched up to the castle, and the portcullis was raised up to admit us, but not a man seemed willing to enter."

"Where was the lieutenant the while?"

"He commanded the men to file into the castle, and finding that they hesitated, he addressed himself to me to know the cause: I declared my willingness to obey the Count, but refused to serve your father's murderer, and the man who carried off the lady Isabel."

"That was bravely done: but what followed?"

"I asked to see the Count."

"He came to you, I suppose?"

"No, Sir; he sent word he would not acknowledge traitors."

"What happened then?"

"About fifty of us turned away, and nearly three hundred more, seeing us march off, followed."

"What became of the rest?"

"They followed the lieutenant into the castle."

"What do you intend doing?"

"Join the Montfort men, if you allow us, or return to our homes."

"Where did you pass the night?"

"We marched."

"The whole of the night?"

"Yes, Sir.

"And how are you off for provisions?"

"We have had nothing since yesterday."

"We have plenty," said Maurice Adellien's lieutenant; "they shall have some of ours, if it is your good pleasure, Sir Knight?"

"With all my heart," replied Robert; "they deserve it."

A burst of grateful acknowledgement followed the welcome news, and immediate measures were taken for the supply of the hungry band.

"Where is the lady Isabel?" said the leader of the Barsas troops.

"A prisoner, perhaps a corpse, at the castle of Morbiere," replied Robert.

"We thought as much," said the leader.

When they had taken a hearty meal the poor fellows seemed to revive in strength and spirit, and were eager to attack the castle of Morbiere, supposing that the Montfort troops were the only ones concerned on the occasion: their hopes were greatly raised when they heard of the number that were expected.

Robert was beginning to feel some anxiety for the arrival of the allies, when a large force was seen winding along a narrow road through the forest; as they drew nearer he discovered them to be the troops of the Baron de Rolincour. They were followed by the corps of the Baron de Ferneuf; next, by that of the Count de Moselle; and in the course of

the afternoon all the allied nobles, followed by their vassals, arrived at the rendezvous.

It was an imposing sight to see so many chiefs, with their respective forces, combined to avenge an injured female, to crush the unprincipled tyrant, and raise up virtue upon his downfal. It did honour to the feelings of the age that so much unanimity should exist in all ranks, and that warriors should be so eager in the defence of Isabel, and so ready to risk their lives to punish her persecutor for his crimes. Yes, it did honour to the age; but would our own age be less ready to defend the cause of virtue?—would we be less active in protecting the oppressed?—would the servant or the soldier refuse to follow his master, or his commander, to exterminate the murderer and the unprincipled?—would the cause of liberty be less bravely served?—would the rights of hospitality be less respected?—would the virtuous pledges of the heart be less sacred?—would the interests of pure religion and Christian piety be less dear to all ranks of society in the nineteenth century

than in the twelfth?—No! what was felt in those days would be felt now, and probably in a higher degree than at the time of which we write. A great difference exists, however: the ancient nobles of Christian Europe resembled so many petty kings; they had unlimited power over their vassals, and in most instances had the law in their own hands. In our time the vassal is as free as the lord, and all ranks are equally under the power and protection of the laws of the land, which is at once the guardian of virtue and the scourge of crime. Our forefathers had opportunities of displaying a spirit of chivalry which we have not; and although our hearts are as brave, and our spirit more independent, we are restrained by different customs, and the jealous hand of the law robs us of many laurels which our forefathers plucked, and rewards us, on the other hand, with many privileges and comforts to which they were total strangers. Had the Marquis de Morbiere lived now, a few fleeting hours would have checked his career, and his life would have paid, upon an ignominious

scaffold, the price of his enormities; but he was still courted by many, and, as a rich and powerful noble he was feared, though not respected, and obeyed because he had the power to punish disobedience.

When the chiefs had exchanged hearty congratulations upon their arrival at their eventful destination, Robert related to them the extraordinary circumstance by which his forces were increased from eight hundred to near a thousand; they were doubly pleased by it, inasmuch as it lessened the power of the enemy, of which the necessary consequence would be the saving of many men of their own.

After much conversation on the subject, the veteran complimented his young friend on the excellent order of his men. "Upon my word," said he, "I never saw the thing better done in my life; they are really fine fellows, and are wonderfully well armed."

"They are not my own," replied Robert, "therefore I may join in your praises; I do not think I ever saw men so well picked, they all look like brothers."

"This Maurice Adellien must be a fine fellow," said the veteran; "how the devil can he have such a turn for soldiering, I never knew of his bearing a helmet."

"He never did," said the lieutenant; "but he knows more about it than we do. If the least plate of armour is missing or imperfect, it is immediately replaced; no expence is spared to keep up the establishment."

"That's what I wonder at," said the veteran; "he is at peace with every one, has not one earthly cause for fear, and still he keeps up the same military establishment as his late lords."

"I understand he does it out of respect to their memory," said the lieutenant.

"That is well enough," said the Baron de Rochefort, "and very praiseworthy, but where's the use of it?"

"We see the use of it now," said the Baron de Ferneuf.

"We do indeed," quoth the veteran; "he is a generous old man, and these are devilish fine fellows."

Blunt as was the compliment, it pleased the men, who were in every respect worthy of it.

"When do we march?" said the Count de Moselle.

"Not yet," replied the veteran; "we must recruit ourselves first. I dare say both men and horses are as hungry as I am; we have plenty of provision, let us begin."

The motion being agreed to, the horses were first provided for; rations were next served out to the men, and the chiefs were served by their attendants, who did not fail to take care of themselves.

Robert ate with a heavy heart; he fancied what his poor wife must suffer, at a moment when she expected his being engaged in the heat of battle; he thought too of the situation of Isabel, who, if alive, would hear the clashing of arms, the groans of the dying, and the shouts of contending warriors; the picture was neither exaggerated, nor overclouded, and although he hoped, he could not help dwelling upon the worst, and was utterly wretched.

CHAPTER XV.

The sun had long been set when the warfaring nobles arrived at the castle of Morbiere, which instantly became a scene of the greatest confusion. The Marquis and the Count de Barsas ran from side to side giving directions, and seeing that all was ready for defence: their men lined the towers and battlements; implements of destruction were quickly collected: every one buckled on their armour and hurried to their posts.

The Marquis did not expect to be so soon attacked, and many formidable preparations were incomplete: he was much disappointed by the desertion of Adrien's troops, and the few that remained seemed too unwilling to repose much confidence in their services. Some grumbled aloud, whilst others desired to be released; but their complaints and demands were equally unheeded; the warder had placed

a strong party at the portcullis, which rendered all hopes of escape too vain to be attempted.

When the allied nobles had made all their arrangements, and disposed of their numerous troops to the best advantage, the veteran addressed each division in turn, and represented the necessity of obedience, steadiness, and bravery: his harangue was short, but it was eloquent, and was received with respectful and soldierlike silence. Having fulfilled this important task, he addressed his brother nobles, and bid them be cool in action, and take the best care in their power of their lives, and of the lives of the generous fellows who so valiantly faced an enemy in a cause which they had as much at heart as if it had been their own: he then shook them cordially by the hand, and requested them to repair to their several corps.

By order of the veteran a trumpeter sounded his shrill bugle to demand a parley; the warlike note was soon answered from the castle, and a warrior sent by the haughty Morbiere

appeared upon the tower on the right side of the portcullis, to know what was desired: the veteran said he wished to speak a few words to the Marquis de Morbiere, and that upon the faith of a brave knight he would not take advantage of his appearance. Some time elapsed, during which the Marquis consulted with the Count de Barsas; at length he came forward.

"Are you the Marquis de Morbiere?" said the Baron de Rochefort in a loud and imposing voice.

"I am," replied the armoured noble: "What means this hostile force?"

"I have desired to speak to you in person," said the veteran, "to claim, in the name of the nobles, who signed the declaration I put into your hand, the restoration of the much injured Isabel de Barsas:—Will you give her up?"

"I know nothing of her," replied the Marquis; "and if I did, I would give you no satisfaction."

"You, Marquis de Morbiere, are called upon to release into our hands the lady Isabel

de Barsas, and we promise, as trusty nobles, to withdraw our troops from your castle, if she be delivered to us alive and well: we charge you in the face of Almighty God of having her within your castle, and we swear most solemnly not to leave it, until she is so restored, or that we have avenged her wrongs by levelling it to the earth." The veteran delivered this sentence in such an impressive manner that it quite chilled the blood of the men who surrounded their worthless master.

"I defy you," exclaimed the hardened monster; "do your worst, I will do mine."

So saying he disappeared from the tower, and a volley of arrows fell about the veteran and his men; one struck him violently upon the breast, and several men were wounded by them. The signal thus given by the Marquis, was immediately followed; the bugle sounded a shrill blast, and a general attack instantly commenced.

As it had been previously agreed to attack all sides of the castle at the same time,

Robert de Barsas and Henry de Rolincourt were directed by the veteran to endeavour to effect a breach in the walls of the deserted part of the castle. The Marquis had altogether neglected its defence, and by dint of exertion their resolute men attained their object. Robert and his young friend dismounted, and gave their horses to some of their followers. The breach, though small, would admit two or three men at a time, and the whole of the two corps introduced themselves into the court yard; with a little more exertion, and without the least resistance, they forced open the inner door and got into the castle: but all was silent save the echo of the blows dealt on the other side.

Robert led the way, and commanded his men to follow: darkness prevailed throughout, and they had nothing to guide them but the wall. Robert walked cautiously on, and after winding through several passages, ascending and descending flights of steps, he reached the range of dungeons; suddenly he struck himself against an open door: he cau-

tioned his followers of it, and felt his way into the dungeon where mouldered the remains of the murdered female: horror-struck with the smell, he pressed forward with his hands before him, when they suddenly rested on the slender dress in which the unfortunate creature had expired.

"Gracious God!" he exclaimed, "what is this?"

Several men drew near, and Robert, trembling like a leaf, pulled off his gauntlet and passed his hand along the dress.

"A corpse!" he exclaimed. "A putrid corpse: my sister, our Isabel, has been murdered:"—he burst into a violent flood of tears. One of his followers felt the corpse, and declared it must have been there much longer than the lady Isabel had been at the castle, for it was almost decayed. Robert then recollected the story related by Baba, and the account he gave of the murdered female in the dungeon. To ascertain whether it was indeed the same, Robert felt for the chain, which he soon found; his mind being somewhat relieved

by reflection, he retraced his steps towards the passages and heard himself called by Henry de Rolincour. After much feeling and perplexity he found him, and was immediately told that having broken open two doors which were strongly barricaded, some hopes were entertained of getting at the enemy.

During all this time great progress was making on the outside; and many wounded men were already removed without the lines. The veteran, as active as in the days of his youth, encouraged the besiegers, who redoubled their efforts every time his martial voice sounded upon their ears. The besieged seemed desperate, for they knew not the strength of their opponents, and flattered themselves they would be able to effect a sortie, and completely route them. Ponderous stones were thrown down amidst the assailants, and arrows poured forth in showers; but the battle was yet in its infancy, and little damage was done on either side. The Rochefort archers picked off many men from the battlements, some of which fell outside, and others within the castle.

As the cavalry could not be brought into close action until the making of a sufficient breach, they were placed in the rear; but they were not inactive, for they kept up a constant shower of arrows whenever the appearance of enemies on the towers and battlements gave an opportunity of exerting themselves. Most of the damage which the allies suffered was done through the lower loop-holes, and they would have lost a great number of men, had not the veteran ordered them to shelter themselves as much as possible with their shields.

The Marquis de Beaupré and Baron de Ferneuf were not less successful on the right flank, than the Count de Moselle and the Duke de Briançon were on the left; they each began to effect breaches in the wall, and prosecuted the work of destruction with the most indefatigable spirit.

Henry and Robert were equally active in the interior of the castle, and after many vain attempts, they got into a small suite of apartments, followed by upwards of seven hundred men, and soon after made their way to a sa-

loon which was splendidly illuminated; but all was deserted, every man was under arms, and every female had sought safety in remoter parts of the castle.

"*En avant*," exclaimed Robert, elated with the appearance of success; "*En avant! il faut vaincre ou mourir.*" The whole troop shouted the words after him, and dashed forward with desperate eagerness towards the castle court.

"A breach, a breach," roared the terrified Morbiere, as he beheld the enemy in the first quadrangle. He perceived that some of them were Barsas' troops, and impressed with an idea that Adrien had turned against him, he ran up to him and accused him of treachery.

"Perfidious wretch!" he exclaimed, levelling at him a deadly blow with his battle-axe; "take the price of your infamy." The blow was but too well aimed, for it almost severed his neck in twain, and he fell speechless at his feet.

"Have I done for thee?" vociferated the murderer. The deed was indeed done; Adrien

heaved a deep drawn sigh, and expired. Having no other light than what was reflected from the apartments of the castle, and by the glittering stars, Robert did not see the murder of his brother; but as he pressed forward at the head of the men, he stumbled over the corpse, and recognised his well-known armour; this was a dreadful moment for the affectionate heart of Robert: big tears rolled down his cheeks; he pulled away the visor from Adrien's face, and saw but too plainly that the hand of death had for ever closed his eyes. Unwilling that the remains of his misguided brother should remain exposed to the brutality of an infuriated soldiery, he desired some of his men to remove the body to a more secluded spot; he was quickly obeyed, they carried it into an apartment of the castle, and returned to him.

Much as Robert felt on the melancholy occasion, it was not a time for giving vent to his feelings; he was surrounded with enemies, and his soldiers needed his orders.

"Avenge another murder," exclaimed Henry de Rolincour; "Give no quarters."

These words were the signal of dreadful carnage, the troops rushed upon the enemy, the men of Montfort performed the most extraordinary acts of valour, they fought like lions. Wherever Robert was, there were they; they fought by his side, and parried many hard blows which were levelled at him. Whilst they were thus engaged within the castle, a large breach was made in the walls, through which the Count de Moselle and the Baron de Ferneuf rode their gallant chargers; horsemen and men on foot followed as quickly as they could get through the breach, and the scene of destruction which had been carried on without the castle, was now renewed with tenfold acrimony within it. The Marquis de Morbiere had long been missed, and it was generally hoped that he had fallen a victim to his own infamy, but he was again seen on one of the highest towers, directing the throwing down of battlement stones upon the invaders. The ravage done by them was equally great to the besieged as the besiegers.

The scene baffled all description, killed and

wounded were trod under the horses' feet, the loud clashing of arms resounded on every side; shouts and groans were mingled together, and conquest was equally uncertain on either side.

Distracted with fear of being made prisoner, or of seeing his castle demolished from under him, the Marquis de Morbiere had recourse to all kinds of expedients to destroy his enemies, and throw them into confusion; but so intense was the clamour of voices and the clashing of metal against metal, that his commands were only heard by a few about him. A most diabolical expedient was now resorted to; large beams were set on fire upon the towers, and when blazing, were thrown down among the soldiery; the horses, terrified by the falling masses of fire, reared and tore in terror amongst the infantry, upsetting many, and causing the greatest confusion. No sooner did he see the success of the measure, than beam after beam was brought and thrown in the same way amongst the people below.

Robert, the veteran, the Duke, and Henry de Rolincour, followed by a large number of

men, rushed through the castle in search of Isabel, but she was no where to be found, and the dangers to which their men were exposed, and the fruitlessness of the search, obliged them to return to the courts to direct a general ransack of the castle.

They had scarce joined their men, when the cry of "fire," resounded among the troops. It was not without cause, for some parts of the blazing beams were blown into the castle, and flames soon burst forth in all directions. The scene was now dreadful, and the agony of Robert's heart was truly horrible; there was no prospect of saving his sister; if alive, she must perish in the flames: all his friends were as wretched as himself.

Robert would have rushed into the blazing castle, had he not been prevented by the veteran, who bid him remember his wife; the dear name acted like a charm upon him, he was in a moment more composed, though not less miserable. Suddenly, the screams of a female were heard; every one listened from whence they came; eyes were strained in every

direction, but the screams ceased; again they rent the air, and Isabel was dragged by Carl and Paul to the tower upon which stood the Marquis de Morbiere. The vivid light of the blazing castle exhibited her pale and affrighted countenance; her eyes were fixed with horror upon the scenes below; she beheld contending warriors, she knew they were fighting for her, and could not save her. Her hair hung loose about her shoulders, and her torn dress bespoke the violence which had been used against her. Carl, the merciless Carl, held a dagger over her, and the still more hardened Morbiere dragged her forward to precipitate her among the ruins and warriors below, when the ghost of Montfort appeared between the murderers, and carried her off amidst the cries of the trembling multitudes. The murderers stood motionless with horror, and Robert, his friends, and the soldiery, were as awed with wonder. "The ghost! the ghost!" were the only words that were audible; not a blow was struck, all were equally transfixed with dread, anxiety, and astonishment. This awful pause, and the

silence which prevailed, were interrupted, by a dreadful crash, the foundation of the tower upon which stood the affrighted murderers gave way, and they were buried among the burning ruins. Fortunately they fell within the castle, and injured none of the combatants. The veteran, Henry de Rolincour, the Count de Moselle, the Duke de Briançon, and some of their friends and a host of men, were driven by the falling tower, by a postern door leading from the standing part of the castle; the cry of "the ghost!" was again heard, and the spectre was seen gliding swift as the wind towards the door; Robert hurried forward to meet it, but it was too fleet for him; and with Isabel in its arms, it rushed out; but as it did not stoop as it passed the threshold, its helmet was knocked off, and exhibited to view the well-known features of Albert de la Lance. Much more quickly than the pen can tell it, Isabel recognised in the supposed spirit, the dear object of her affections; she hung about his neck; and the veteran, who had known the Count de Montfort in the fields of Palestine,

and Robert, hailed him as brother and son. "A truce," instantly sounded throughout the place, and joy succeeded the carnage of battle. But this was no place for Isabel, the fire spread in all directions, and Philip de Montfort, surrounded by hundreds of anxious followers, passed through one of the breaches, and bore her beyond the reach of danger.

Had the veteran been the father of Philip de Montfort, he could not have been more delighted than he was; he called him by every tender name he could think of, and wept with the twofold happiness of having brought about the delivery of Isabel, and of finding in her lover the hero of Palestine and the reputed ghost of Montfort. He verily believed him dead; and as disbelief in matters of religion never formed part of his creed, he as sincerely credited that his restless spirit roamed about in search of his murderer.

"I have saved you at last then?" said Montfort, to his overjoyed Isabel; "you are now safe, and with your *Albert*."

"Yes, my generous Albert," replied Isabel,

"You are indeed my deliverer; I have a thousand questions to ask; this mystery must be explained."

"It shall, my dearest love," said he; "you shall know every thing; thus much I can tell you; your Albert and Philip de Montfort are one and the same person." At that moment a warrior brought him his helmet; and the veteran produced a large cloak, which was immediately thrown about Isabel, who began to feel the bitter coldness of the night.

The difficulty was now, how to provide some means of conveyance for her, as there was not the slightest hope that any of the Marquis de Morbiere's carriages had escaped the general conflagration. Robert reminded his friends that one of the Montfort baggage waggons, in which there was a quantity of clean straw, was tilted, and proposed laying some cloaks upon it, and muffling her up so as to prevent her taking cold. It was quickly agreed that Isabel should be thus conveyed to a place where she might rest for the remainder of the night. Several hundreds of horsemen

were summoned to escort her, and by the desire of the assembled nobles, Philip de Montfort took the command of them.

As the castle still blazed with great fury, it was as light as day for a considerable distance, and the allies were able to gather their men together and ascertain the number of their killed and wounded; although the amount of the latter was considerable, the number of the former was very small.

All the provision waggons were put into requisition, and the wounded were carried away; including those of the Marquis de Morbiere, whose number of killed was great. Those of his vassals who were not wounded, were allowed to return to their homes, and the many who had no home to go to were permitted to follow the Montfort troops; among them were all the female servants, and many males who had taken no part in the battle.

Not to detain the reader with an account of what followed at the castle of Morbiere, it will suffice to say that it was burnt to the ground, and that before the fire subsided, all the allied troops were on their march home.

CHAPTER XVI.

As Isabel journeyed on, she recollected her promise to honest La Bruyère, and requested Philip de Montfort to have her conveyed there, instead of proceeding onward to the village where his troops had passed the night before. They soon arrived there, and were not long rousing the good farmer, who, from the window desired to know what was wanted of him:—the case was soon explained, and the name of Isabel de Barsas dispelled at once the fears which had been created by the number of troops about his house.

With as little delay as possible, La Bruyère, his wife, and their maid, threw open the door and welcomed the lady who had so excited his interest at the Croix d'Or. They stirred up the lingering embers and made a blazing fire, and produced what refreshment their house afforded.

Philip (for we shall no longer call him Albert de la Lance) having provided for the comfort of his adored Isabel, went out to make arrangements for his men; but la Bruyère opposed their being sent forward, and assured him he would attend to their wants. Philip represented the largeness of their numbers, but this was no bar to the farmer's hospitality; he threw open a large barn in which there was abundance of clean straw, and directed the men where to find provender for their horses, which they tied up in sheds and other covered out-houses. A quantity of provision was soon procured from the waggon, a large fire was made on a paved yard outside the barn, which afforded light enough to render it comfortable; la Bruyère gave the troops a barrel of wine, and they passed away the night as jovially as if nothing had occurred to ruffle their tempers.

Philip de Montfort prevailed upon Isabel to take a few hours' rest, which were very necessary to her exhausted frame; the farmer's wife prepared her a bed, and she retired to it,

having previously obtained a promise from her lover that he would likewise rest himself. He pulled off his armour, and, wrapped up in a blanket, with a pillow beneath his head, he stretched himself upon a long screened bench, and in a few moments lost all remembrance of the perils to which he had been exposed.

The morning sun awakened Isabel from her slumbers, and, assisted by the farmer's pretty wife, she prepared to join Philip in the kitchen in which he had passed the night. Isabel's dress was in such a tattered state, and so ill adapted to the severity of the season, that she was obliged to accept the use of the good woman's wardrobe, the simplicity of which so became her, that when Montfort beheld her, he thought she had never looked so beautiful.

Before they left the farm, the Count obtained a promise from the farmer and his wife, that they would soon visit the castle of Montfort; and put his well-replenished purse in La Bruyère's hand, who lustily protested against receiving the least remuneration, but who was finally obliged to submit. Isabel now travelled

in a less humble way, having expressed her desire to ride on horseback, Philip borrowed the necessary saddle, and placed her on the milk white charger which had carried her from the castle of Morbiere to the cavern of death. He betook himself of the horse of one of his attendants, whom he left to proceed in the waggon. The Count and Isabel took a final leave of their humble friends, and, surrounded by a large number of horsemen, rode off at a brisk gallop towards the castle of Briançon, at which they arrived before sun-set. As they had for some time been seen from the watch-tower, the whole castle was agitated with fear and anxiety. In a little time, however, a female was discovered among the host of warriors, and the joyful acclamations succeeded every other feeling. The gates were thrown open, and the Duchess, Susan, Mary de Moselle, and a multitude of friends and followers, crowded out to hail the return of their beloved Isabel: but what was their wonder when the mysterious being that had before saved her, and which had so terrified the Duchess and

her daughter at the castle of Barsas, was seen riding by her side? they felt an indescribable tremor, and would almost have sunk with apprehension. Had they recollected that spirits vanish before the sun, such fears would not have existed.

At a short distance from the castle, Montfort had pulled down his visor, so that when they entered the castle-gates he appeared the same mysterious character as before. Isabel was rendered so happy by her delivery, that her spirits surpassed her strength, and she sprung from her saddle into the arms of the excellent Duchess, who shed tears of joy as she pressed her to her bosom. Susan claimed the next embrace, and was no less rejoiced than her mother; but her eye searched round for something which she could not find. "He is safe and well," said Isabel; "your Robert will be here very shortly; all our friends are safe." The news was most grateful to all around, and particularly to Susan, the Duchess, the Marquis de Beaupré, and the Countess de Moselle, whose anxious hearts had long ached

for the safety of those that were dear to them. Margaret and Mary de Moselle were the two next to claim an embrace; all the rest congratulated her most heartily; but their minds dwelt upon the renowned spirit; and Baba stepped back as it advanced after Isabel.

"You see my deliverer," said she, highly amused with their fears; "the spectre has seen me safe here, for which I trust you will make him welcome."

The Duchess bowed, and the spectre nodded his large white plumes.

"Pray let them see your face, *Monsieur le revenant*," said Isabel, and at the same time she pushed up his beaver.

"*Grand Dieu!*" exclaimed the astonished Duchess, amidst the exulting cries of the assembled multitude, "Albert de la Lance!" she caught him by the hand, and would have expressed her joy, but her full heart deprived her of utterance.

"You see the Count de Montfort," said Isabel, "my *poor, humble* lover."

Astonishment was at its height, and happi-

ness almost bordered upon madness, the inferior guests ran from end to end of the castle, shouting the wonderful news, and filling the air with cries of triumph.

When these feelings had somewhat subsided in the saloon, the Duchess begged to know how Isabel's escape had been effected; they related all they knew, and waited the return of Robert and his gallant friends, to inform them of what still remained to be known. Meanwhile Isabel was informed of the sad tidings of her mother's death, and it needed all the fond persuasions of Philip de Montfort to stay the flood of tears with which she was bathed; but those bitter tears were not long to cease flowing, for, on the return of the allied nobles, she was informed of the fate of the infatuated Adrien, and forgetting his cruelty to her, she shed the unaffected tears of sisterly affection. Every one felt for her, and none more sincerely than her lover, who, after a reasonable time, was begged to explain the mystery which had filled so many with terror, and awakened the superstition of the whole province.

"You all know," said he, "under what circumstances I left home for Holy Land; but none of you know that I already loved my Isabel: she was very young, and still my heart clung to her, although the feuds which had so long existed in our families rendered all prospect of union impossible. The Count, her father, had offered several insults to my parents, which were strongly impressed upon my mind, and bred the same feeling of animosity which they had for so many years indulged. When in Palestine I became intimately acquainted with the Baron de Rochefort, and spent much of my time in his society. A young warrior who nobody knew, contrived to get into our notice, and was for some time admitted with increasing intimacy. In the course of conversation Isabel, as the daughter of my neighbour, was frequently mentioned, and I betrayed those sentiments which I have so often confessed. On such occasions he was particularly attentive, and raised in the Baron's mind great suspicions of his sincerity. At last he disappeared, and

some time after I was attacked by several armed men, and received a deep wound in the side. Supposing me killed, all, with the exception of one man, made a successful retreat, but he remained by me, and having ridded me of my armour, sucked the wound and bound it up, he then replaced me upon my horse and bid me follow him. I was scarcely able to ride, and yet as if by instinct, my horse followed his: he led me to a distant village, where he informed me that he was sent with several men to murder me; that the Marquis de Morbiere was the person who hired them, and that my death was irrevocably determined. He told me my father had been his benefactor, and that he went to Palestine in hopes to save my life; he had already resisted the murderers, but they threatened to make him their first victim, and chose a moment when he was at some distance to attempt my life. This man was Fortmain, and the leader of the gang was the infamous Carl.

"Fortmain proved himself to be a man of sound judgment, and he has more than once

saved me from death by his coolness and intrepidity. By his advice I returned to Europe, where my faithful steward Maurice Adellien had conducted my affairs beyond my most sanguine hopes. I arrived late at night; the moon was beautifully bright, the night extremely mild, and many persons roamed about in the precincts of the castle, which had long been a favourite walk. I dismounted, and sent Fortmain with my horse and his own by a secret entrance, celebrated by the name of the cavern of death. My object in sending him forward was, that I should be able to pay my tribute to my mother's memory, and know whether justice had been done in my absence to the plot of ground which she delighted in cultivating; it happened that I was seen by several persons, and it was immediately reported that the spirit of the murdered Montfort haunted the spot. Hearing this ridiculous story on the following morning, I imagined the plan of assuming the appearance of a man of humble fortune, to enable me to see Isabel; but there existed considerable dif-

ficulties which required much management, as I might be soon known, and my life might be again attempted. I submitted a plan to Maurice Adellien, which he approved of; it was to take a house on the domain of Barsas, and get acquainted with the Count.

"Maurice Adellien, Fortmain, and my old domestic, were the only persons who knew of my being alive, and who were in the secret. The ghost story became the subject of universal conversation. It was Fortmain who got me into the castle of Barsas by a subterraneous passage known but to few: it was he again who got me into the castle of Morbiere, and directed me where to find Isabel.

"I am indebted to the belief of my being the spectre of Philip de Montfort for my life, and for the safety of my Isabel. I used to see Maurice Adellien at midnight by getting into the castle by the long subterraneous passage, the cavern of death; it was in the castle that I put on my armour, and where I took it back; my white horse was kept in the cavern, unknown to any one but my old domestic, who had

the care of him in a convenient subterraneous stable.

"I think I have now told you enough, that you may, by adding all you know, complete my eventful history: it was love that made me remain in disguise, and I would have remained so, perhaps, for the rest of my life, if the events which have happened in the family of Barsas, and the discovery caused by the knocking off of my helmet, had not rendered any further concealment unnecessary. I won Isabel's heart as the humble Albert de la Lance, and in presence of you, my kind friends, claim her hand in the character of Philip de Montfort."

Isabel's looks gave all the consent that was required, and but for the death of her unworthy brother, she would have been completely happy.

Our tradition draws to a conclusion, and we will end it as briefly as possible. After some weeks' mourning for Adrien, Isabel rewarded her lover's constancy by pledging him her faith at the altar, Mary de Moselle and the Duke de Briançon, and Margaret and Baba,

were united at the same time. The happiness which these events diffused was experienced throughout the province. Maurice Adellien retired to the house which Albert had lately inhabited, and there lived to a good old age, equally beloved and respected, and in his own opinion the happiest man in France. Dominick became cheerful and contented; when Isabel was married he went to his old friend the woodcutter, and related all the wonderful things that had happened.

"I know them all, I know them all," said the rustic, with a smile, "but you wouldn't believe me, master Dominick; I told you the tyrant's castle would be levelled to the ground, I told you how he would end; and that the castles of Montfort and Barsas would come together; you laughed at me then, and now, master Dominick, you see how right I was. Well, God bless 'em, I have beheld all I wished to see, and could now die without a sigh."

The lovely Isabel lived a long and happy life with the most affectionate of husbands, and several children blessed their union. They

died, at a great age, within a few days of each other. Susan and Robert were equally happy, and were blessed with a lovely family. Mary de Moselle and the Duke were no less happy in every respect, and Baba and his wife were equally so.

The Duchess de Briançon lived to be very old; she was the same amiable being to the last, and derived all her happiness from that of her children.

No one felt more the change which had taken place of late than the brave veteran: he lived and died a true soldier, honourable and sincere; a good friend, and an excellent companion.

The Baron de Ferneuf talked of marrying, until he was too far advanced in life to think of it; he continued a great favourite with the fair sex, and passed much of his time at the castles of Montfort, Barsas, and Briançon.

Fortmain chose himself a wife, and settled on an excellent farm, which Philip gave him; there he lived as happy as the days were long.

As soon as Robert took possession of his

castle he dismissed the crafty priest, but what became of him is not known; he probably remained an outcast from society. Baba and his wife dwelt all their lives in the castle, and were made as happy as they deserved.

As the Marquis de Morbiere was the last of his line, the whole of his property reverted to the crown; but, such was the estimation in which Philip de Montfort was held, that the King presented the domain of Morbiere to his second son, with the title of Baron de la Lance.

THE END.

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